Simple Living

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast. A podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. I've titled the message this morning, Simple Living.

What I want to give you from this passage of Philippians 4, 8, and 9, I hope this morning will be three simple things that come straight from the text to help keep your lives simple.
To provide clarity with how to live. Everybody here understands that our world can be a busy one and demands on your time and your schedule and all kinds of outside noises and voices can get very loud and we have to kind of work to keep our life simple.
If we're not careful, we'll go through life trying to please everybody other than the only one who truly matters. That would be what the Lord says is pleasing to him.
Everybody here knows what it's like to worry about what your friends think of you or what your boss thinks of you or what somebody that you run around with thinks of you.
[1:45] Everybody knows what it's like to compare your life or your house or your car or your vacations to other people.

That even comes across this time of year as people are on vacations. And I promise you, you're going to click on social media. You're going to see people that are on a trip that's way more extravagant than you're going on and say, how are they able to do that?
If we're not careful, even our times of vacation and rest get filled up with comparisons that can end up robbing us of our joy. How do we live simple lives?
Lives of impact, lives of power, and lives of influence, we pray, but keeping things simple.
Remember that Paul writes this from Rome while under house arrest.
He's lost his freedom, but he's not lost his joy. And that is possible because his mind is completely focused on what matters most.
[3:01] Now hear me clear this morning, friends, that for your life to truly be lived the way that it should, and for you to live with the simplicity and influence that you desire, it must be because your mind is clear.

He says in chapter 4, as we've already looked at the last several weeks at the end of verse 1, stand firm in the Lord.
Don't confuse simple living with passive living. Don't confuse simple living with weak living, or simple living is not cowardly living. Simple living means that we have a very clear, focused mind on what we must do, what we must be about, and we just refuse to let other things distract us from what matters most.
So he begins chapter 4 by saying, stand firm in the Lord. How do we do that? Well, chapter 4, verse 8 becomes the answer to that question of how we stand firm.
As he says, finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.
[4:28] In order to live right, you must think right. And as we looked at last week in verses 4-7, it tells us in verse 7, the peace of God will guard our hearts and our minds, which means that God's peace produces active minds.

If you've experienced the true peace of God, it has produced within you an active mind that loves to think and loves to learn, loves to meditate, loves to consider, loves to grow in your knowledge and your awareness of who God is and of how we should live.
The peace of God is completely linked together with how we think. In verse 7, God's peace produces a certain way of thinking.

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And a certain way of thinking produces and brings peace with God. And the link just continues. How you think and what you think about has everything to do with the peace that you live with and live in. So three simple things I want to give you today from this text that I hope will help each of us. Number one, think this way. Think this way.
[6:05] There is a way that we must think. The battle for godliness is waged and won in the mind. In a day in which we live where everything seems to be tied in all with the emotions when it comes to worship, let us be clear.

Emotions are not bad. Emotions are not the enemy. But emotions make a very dangerous way to evaluate your life. There may be some of you this morning and you're here today because it's the right thing to do, not because you felt like it.
For some of you today, you don't feel well physically. For some of you today, you've had a very stressful week. For some of you, you're thinking already about things that are coming up next week that already have your mind a bit anxious.
But you're here because it's where you're supposed to be. It's where you need to be. It's where it's best for you to be. You don't want to govern your life by emotions.
If you get behind the wheel of your car and you let emotions gauge how fast you drive, you will soon find yourself without a license. Because rarely do you ever look at a speed limit and say, you know what, I like to go slower.
[7:31] I like to get there a little bit longer. But we govern ourselves by thinking of what is best and what is wise, not just by how we feel.

As parents, we try to raise our children to what is right and what is best, not just what they feel. And all that comes from being able to learn how to think.
Isaiah 118, Come now, let us reason together. There's a thoughtfulness. Matthew 22, 37, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind.
Romans 12, 2, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. Colossians 3, 2, Set your mind on things that are above.
Our mind must be locked in. There are things we have to know and things on which we have to think. Now again, it's not that emotions are wrong.
[8:40] You should feel things. You ought to feel love for your family. You ought to feel joy in the worship of God. You ought to feel freedom and victory that's been given to you by the cross of Jesus Christ.

But emotions are to come after what we know and flow from a disciplined mind with a settled heart. This isn't just semantics.
It's the difference between living according to what is right or living according to the flesh. Emotions aren't wrong.
They just make really bad leaders. Don't let your life be governed by how you feel. Let your life be governed by thinking on what is true and what is right.
It was some 23 years ago, something like that, I found myself on a mission trip. I had just changed roles here and become pastor.
[9:59] And I was on a mission trip with our church. And on that trip, someone on a trip with us said, Michael said, you know, I appreciate your ministry.

I'm glad you're here in this role. He said, just do me a favor. Promise me you will never, ever preach on doctrine at all. And I said, what do you mean?
He said, just don't ever preach on doctrine. He said, I feel like our church is getting along well. And if you preach on doctrine, it's going to tend to divide us.
And I just want our church to always get along. It's a dangerous way to preach.
It's a dangerous way to live. But it sure is tempting if your mind's not right, isn't it? Don't take any stands.
[11:00] Don't ever offend. Don't ever say something that may cause someone to look at you suspicious. Just always say what someone around you wants you to say. But there's a certain way we have to think.

What we have to set our mind on is that we would think about things that are right. Not about what makes life easier for us.
Not about what would make us more likable or popular. But that we would be truthful. And we are to think on these things.

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Verse 8, Finally, brothers, whatever is true, it's a word that means something that's reliable, something that is faithful. Let your mind dwell on things that are true.
Dwell on things that are reliable. He goes on to say whatever is honorable. That word is used in 1 Timothy and it's used in Titus to describe the character of a deacon and the character of an elder in that text.
[12:15] It means to think about things that are respectable, lofty, dignified, and noble. That you would distance your mind to not think about things that are undignified.

Things that are not honorable. He goes on to say whatever is just. That means things that are righteous.
Things that are in line with God's standard. So we've got to pause for a moment and ask ourselves, what determines what our mind thinks about?
Well, it's conversations you have. It's things you read on the computer screen. It's things that you talk about in conversation.
It's television and movies that you watch. It's everything that has access to your mind. Everything that has an influence on what you believe.
[13:16] An influence on what you know. An influence on what you're thinking of. And he says you need to make sure that you're thinking this way.

Think about things that are honorable. Think about things that are just. Think about things that are true. Fill your mind with things that are right.
It's not hard to understand the connection and the link between the filth that people take into their minds and the way that people treat each other and live their lives.
This is a battle for what has access to your mind. He goes on to say whatever is pure.
This means something that's holy, wholesome, something that's unblemished or unmixed. And there's an important connection here, I think.
[14:21] It says first, whatever is just, then whatever is pure. Here's the distinction. You could be somebody who has a very strong sense of justice.

That you think people who break the law should be punished. You think people who lie and cheat and steal should not be rewarded.
You have a very strong sense of justice. But, if you don't also desire that which is pure, then what will happen is you will allow yourself to indulge in sins even if you think they're not best for other people because you don't see it harming anybody else.
So, for example, someone who has a strong sense of justice but not a sense of purity will allow themselves to dabble in sexual immorality because it didn't hurt anybody else.
That would offend their sense of justice if it did. But justice without purity always lets you off the hook if it's just you by yourself.
[15:40] Whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely. This word is used only here in the New Testament.

It refers to that which is beautiful. That which is pleasant. Let your mind dwell on things that are beautiful. Things that are lovely.
Things that are pleasant. He says, whatever is commendable. Something that's highly regarded. Think of it this way.
Something that God would approve of. And then He says, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.
Think about the things that He's just described. What do I watch? How do I talk? Where do I go?
[16:46] How do I conduct myself? How do I live? How do I respond? How do I react? Just pass it through the test He's just given you.

Before you're tempted to send the email of hatred or the text of anger, before you push submit on that document that's filled with anger and frustration, before you post it on social media, before you respond in conversation, stop and say, is this true?
Is this honorable? Is this just? Is this pure? Is this lovely? Is this commendable?
Your flesh will scream out, you deserve to respond this way. After all, think of what she said to you and think about what He said to you and think about how they lied about you and think about how they overlooked you and think about how they left you out and think about the name they called you and think about how they didn't give you credit for that and on and on and on and your flesh will well up within you and say, you deserve to just speak your mind.

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which is exactly the point. If you're going to speak your mind, the question becomes, what is your mind set on?
[18:29] What is it that fills your mind? Think this way, He says. How many family arguments, church divisions, broken friendships, how many of those things could be rectified if simply both parties would say, we're going to think this way on things that are true and lovely and commendable.

But if all week long, you fill your mind with episodes of anger and language that is unpleasing to the Lord and all kinds of filth and stuff, if that's what's in your mind, that's what is going to come out.
So simple living is this. Think like that. Just get a hold of what has access to your mind.
Get a hold of what your children are looking at and what your teenagers are taking in. Get a hold of the things that have access to your mind and become the things that your mind thinks about all day long.
Think this way. Second, practice these things. Practice these things.
[20:09] Verse 9, what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me practice these things.

Let's look at these terms here. He says, what you have learned. This refers to the personal instruction that Paul has given them when he was in Philippi. What you have received.
This is the things that God has taught them through Paul, including this letter. What you have heard. This is Paul's reputation.
The things they've heard about his life. The things they've heard about his teaching and preaching.
And, what you have seen in me. This is what they have witnessed as they've watched him.
What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Practice these things. Take what you've received and practice them.
[21:19] Put them on display. If you read in your quiet time in the Bible about forgiveness, practice it. Go practice forgiveness.

You read about being long-suffering. Go practice what it means to be long-suffering. Practice these things. Do them. The idea is that you don't just store up information in your mind, but that biblically, that which comes into your mind is to be that which is practiced.
That we put it in motion. It's been said this way. There's a link between thinking and doing, pondering and practicing, learning and living.
We are not what we think we are, but as we think, we are. Think and practice.
Believe and do. Think this way and practice these things. If we don't practice these things, we're going to be people who either take in worldly things and live worldly, or we'll be people who take in spiritual, godly things, don't live them out, and then we just become hypocrites.
[22:43] Think this way and then practice these things. Let your mind be filled with the things of God. dwell on it. Think about it.

Meditate on it. And then, do it. 1 Corinthians 11.1, Paul says, imitate me as I imitate Christ.
That's what it means to practice these things. Live like Christ. James 1.22, be doers of the Word, not hearers only, and so deceiving yourselves.
Purity of the mind, it's been said, is essential for peace of the heart. Think these things and practice these things.
One of the most exhausting things people do is when they try to act like they believe one thing when they really don't, or when they try to pretend to act out on a holiness they don't truly have, it just gets exhausting.
[23:58] But when you can marry what your mind thinks on and what your flesh does, now you're taking in right thinking and it's producing right living and now you enjoy the simple life of a follower of Christ.

keep your life simple. Think this way and practice these things.
Third, live with this peace. Live with this peace. At the end of verse 9 it says, practice these things and the God of peace will be with you.
The result of thinking on godly things is that you will practice godly things. The result of practicing godly things in the right heart and mind is holiness produced in your life.
The result of holiness is the sweet peace of God. So in Philippians 4 7 it says that you will have the peace of God that surpasses all understanding.

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[25:15] In Philippians 4 9 you will have the God of peace that will be with you. So God gives you his peace in verse 7 verse 9 is actually a stronger statement.

Not just that he gives you his peace but he gives you what? Himself. God will give you his peace but it's greater than that he will actually give you himself.
God himself will be with you. This isn't just that he gives you a little bit of who he is and what if it runs out. This is God saying what I have I'm giving to you but I'm giving myself to you that where you are I will be with you so you never have to worry about God's provision running out because God himself will be with you.
This is an amazing promise. If you will think this way and practice these things you can live with this peace the God of peace will be with you.
So I wonder this morning if you are needing peace in your life. Anybody here have too much peace? Life too easy, too good, too smooth?
[26:51] Need more wallets for all your hundreds? The fact of the matter is all of us need to grow in what it means to have a peaceful heart heart and it's one in the mind.

Isaiah 26 says you will keep in perfect peace he whose mind is fixed on you.
God will keep you in perfect peace to the one whose mind is fixed stayed upon him. let your life be lived with simplicity.
Doesn't mean boring, not a life of retreat, but a life that stays so focused that you just run everything through that test.
Am I going to say this? Am I going to watch this? Am I going to talk about this? Am I going to think about this? Am I going to let my mind consider this? Well, is it true?
[28:03] Is it honorable? Is it just? Is it pure? Is it lovely? Is it commendable? Is it excellent?

If so, think on it. If not, give no room for it.
It's pretty simple. it. When it comes to the music you listen to, and the movies you watch, you don't need some pastor to tell you what you can and can't watch, what you can and can't listen to.
The Bible has given you His word right here. Think on these things. If it passes that test, have at it. If it doesn't, be done with it. should I hang out with this group of friends in my middle school, in my high school?
Well, what do your friends think about? What do your friends talk about? What do your friends do? If it looks like this, enjoy it. If not, you make no room for it.
[29:13] Keep your life simple. Should I date this guy? Should I date this girl? Well, does the conversation sound like this? Do they want your mind to be fixed on the Lord?

Or do they want to pull you away from the things that are trustworthy and true and honorable and pure? If they want to pull you away from that, make no room for it. If they think on things that are true and lovely and honorable and excellent and encourage you to do the same thing, enjoy.
Just keep your life simple. But when you give your access to your mind away, when you stop keeping guard over what has access to your mind, you're going to find yourself very quickly and very easily confused and distracted and trying to make excuses for why you're doing things you know you shouldn't do.
and it all started with what had access to your mind. Think this way, practice these things and live with this peace.
Job 23 verse 12 says, I have not departed from the commandment of his lips, I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food. Do you treasure God's word?
[30:55] Do you seek after the teaching of God? Do you long to take it in, to think on it, to memorize it, to consider it, to pray it, to listen to it, to respond to it?

One man put it this way, he said, be careful what you allow behind the steering wheel of your mind because it will either take you where you do not intend to go or drive you deeper into the peace of knowing and obeying the Lord.
This is all a battle of the mind, not circumstance. I've been repeating this for a number of weeks, but it just has to be said to make sure that we don't miss this.
The man who's writing this writes this under house arrest. This is not the life he wanted. Not if he could just choose.
He wants to be out preaching. He wants to be out planting churches. He wants to be out building up leaders. He wants to be out traveling around visiting churches he's planted. But the Lord and his sovereignty has brought this circumstance to be.

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[32:06] And so he just keeps his life simple. I'd like to be preaching the gospel in churches. If I can't be in churches under house arrest, I'll just preach to the soldier who's shackled to me.

So he does that. But I'd like to be out encouraging pastors. I can't do that. I'll write letters to the church and encourage them that way. He just keeps his life simple.
Not about circumstances. About simplicity. What can I do in this circumstance that would be pleasing to God?
If you take most of your questions and most of your problems and most of the things that tend to frustrate and bother you and boil it down to that one question, your life could become so much more clear.
what can I do in this circumstance that would be pleasing to God?
[33:18] Think this way. Practice these things and live with this peace.

the psalmist put it this way. Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked nor stands in the way of sinners nor sits in the seat of scoffers but his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night.
He thinks on these things. It may be for you this morning that one adjustment you need to make is you just need to take in more of God's word to fill your mind up with who he is.
If you're not reading the Bible daily take time starting today to do that. Fill your mind with his word. It may be that you need to listen to music that's focused on the Lord and the power of God and on the victory of Christ and fill your time in your car or fill your time on your morning walks or whatever it may be just to fill your mind with the encouragement of what's true from God's word.
For others you may be doing those things but you also find yourself letting in all kinds of contrary things. For some it may be about allowing in and for others it may be about stopping things that have access to your mind.
[35:16] for others you've let your life get so complicated everything with your child is a battle every decision you make with your teenager is a war just put an end to that Philippians 4.8 is your family direction do we go here do we watch this do we buy this do we use this language do we run with this crowd we'll just run it through the scripture here if it's excellent and honorable and trustworthy and pure enjoy it if it's not don't give your mind away to its influence and for those of you that have kids at home it feels like every single conversation is a battle

I know it's easy to always blame your child it may not always be your child's fault it can be very confusing in a child's life when they feel like they're told to live one way and what they see in their parents is something different so with grace and gentleness and with humility you may just need to sit your family down and say you know what we've grown a little lax here as a family we're not thinking on the right things and that's leading us astray and fathers this is where you in your home stand up and say as for me and my house we're going to think this way so that we can live this way and moms if you're in a home and there's not a father present this is where you stand up and you say we're going to make some changes here and make our life a little more simple and teenagers and children this is where you say
I'm going to stop begging my parents to relax their standards and trying to entice them to let me do what I know is wrong because your desire is to honor God think this way practice these things and live with this peace Lord we thank you for your word and pray that you would use it even today to encourage hearts and homes help us Lord we pray to be willing to evaluate our lives and strive to do the very things you've given us to do let our minds be filled with peace because we have set them on you and your word and may our lives be filled with grace and love and mercy that people would truly see your sun shining and living through us we pray in
Christ's name amen

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