

SIMPLICITY EXERCISE

(*This exercise was originally created by Michael Rice Saxton for use at St. Joseph's Medical Center, South Bend, IN, Sept., 1984. It has been adapted with permission of the author. This exercise may be used as a lead-in to several different discussions regarding transitions, decision-making, letting go, grieving, simple lifestyle choices, etc.)

Introduction: In advance of the session, prepare slips of paper in five different colors, having 15 slips for each participant. Instruct participants that the slips of paper represent different aspects of a person's life. Ask participants to fill out the slips in the following manner:

- 3 slips of pink: people that are important to them; 3 slips of blue: activities that they enjoy doing;
- 3 slips of yellow: positive perceptions of themselves;
- 3 slips of green: ways in which they minister to others;
- 3 slips of white: hopes, beliefs or dreams they have about their life. These can be religious or philosophical.

Having done so, invite them to sit back and listen to the story to the extent that they can identify with the person in the story.

You're on a journey with all of your papers packed nicely in your backpack. You decide that you want to take a train from Paris to Germany. Your train ticket costs one blue and one other color.

Take two slips, one blue, and crumple them up and throw them into the center of the room -any two that you choose -pause.

You continue on your journey. ..but you are growing hungry. You befriend another walking along your same route. He agrees to invite you in for dinner. ..in exchange for two more papers.

PAUSE: At this point, instruct participants, "you have to give up two more things. "

Your friend agrees to provide you with shelter for the night... for free. The next day, you continue your hike, but become lost. ...You need a ride back to town. ..Cab fare costs two more papers.

PAUSE.. Instruct participants, "you have to give up two more things. "

Your return to the city and decide to call home. The recorded voice on the machine says. ..two things please. ..

PAUSE: Instruct participants, "you have to give up two more things. "

Now you need lodging for this night. There is no room at the local inn, so you are forced to stay in an expensive hotel. The cost..three things!

PAUSE: This time instruct participants, "you have to give up three more things. "

PAUSE: At this point, ask the participants to "take the remaining slips that you have and hold them like you are looking at a handful of playing cards. Now turn to the person on your immediate right, have them take one

slip away This is the conclusion of the formal exercise. The facilitator then attempts to invite the persons to reflect on their thoughts, feelings, and emotions as we went through the exercise.

Possible Prompting Questions:

- * What is your overall reaction to this exercise?
- * On what basis did you choose which things to throw out?
- * Did it seem progressively more difficult to choose between people and items of importance to you?
- * Did you hold onto people? activities? values? etc.
- * How did you react to letting someone else choose one of your last items? * What was the purpose of this exercise?

Following an open discussion of the activity, the facilitator could begin a more "structured" presentation on simple lifestyles and decision-making processes. The presentation can focus on the role simplicity has in enhancing community and in following the example of Christ.

"LIVE SIMPLY SO OTHERS MIGHT SIMPLY LIVE!"