

Kingdom Vision Special Report

by Orlando Mostert

Part 1

Time for a Simpler Way

A Call to God's People to Return to Godly Contentment in an Age of Excess

Introduction: The Groaning of Creation and the Call to Return

There is a groaning in creation, and there is a groaning in the Spirit-filled Church. Paul told the Romans that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Romans 8:22), waiting for the sons of God to be revealed. We are living in the days when that groaning has become audible even to secular ears — in exhausted soils, depleted aquifers, choking landfills, and economies built on debt that can never be repaid. But the Church has heard a deeper groaning for a very long time: the ache of a people made in God's image, told by the Spirit that "godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6), yet formed daily by a culture that preaches the opposite gospel — that more is always better, that identity is found in possession, and that the good life is the acquired life.

This article is a call to something the Holy Spirit has never stopped calling the Church toward: a simpler way of life. Not simplicity as a fad, not minimalism as an aesthetic, but simplicity as obedience — a deliberate turning away from the "cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches" (Matthew 13:22) that choke the Word, and a turning toward a life "hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3). It draws on a body of secular thought that has, in recent years, argued forcefully that the industrial consumer economy cannot continue as it is — that the earth's resources are being drawn down far faster than they can be replenished, that a handful of nations cannot indefinitely consume a hugely

disproportionate share of the world's goods, and that the only sane and sustainable future is one of much simpler, more local, more cooperative living. Those observations, made without reference to Scripture, turn out to describe — almost verse for verse — what the Bible has been teaching the people of God for three and a half thousand years. Where the secular case rests on ecology and economics, the Christian case rests on something sturdier still: the character of God, the example of Christ, and the pattern of the early Church.

What follows is not a political manifesto or an economic policy paper. It is a pastoral and prophetic appeal, addressed to the Body of Christ, to consider whether the affluence we call normal is in fact a captivity — and whether the Lord is inviting His people, in this generation, into a Simpler Way.

I. A World Reaching Its Limits: Resources, Energy, and the End of Cheap Abundance

Scripture never treats the earth's resources as infinite or as ours to plunder. "The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof" (Psalm 24:1). Humanity was given dominion over creation (Genesis 1:28), but dominion in the biblical sense is stewardship, not exploitation — the same relationship a faithful servant has to a master's estate (Luke 12:42-48), not the relationship of an owner who may do as he pleases with what is not, finally, his own.

Contemporary observers of the global economy — economists, ecologists, and systems analysts alike — have spent the last half-century documenting what happens when a civilization forgets this. Modern industrial societies extract resources, burn energy, and generate waste at rates that cannot be sustained for many more decades, let alone extended to the rest of the world's population at current Western living standards. Cheap, easily accessible oil, minerals, fertile soil, and fresh water are being consumed at a pace that leaves less and less for those who come after. It has been estimated that if the whole world tried to consume resources at the rate of the wealthiest nations, it would require the productive capacity of several planets, not one. We have only one.

This should not surprise the Christian reader. The prophets repeatedly warned Israel that a land can be exhausted, that a people's greed can turn a fruitful land into a wasteland (see Isaiah 5:8-10, Hosea 4:1-3, Jeremiah 12:4). The Law itself commanded a Sabbath rest for the land every seventh year, and a Jubilee release every fiftieth (Leviticus 25:1-12), precisely so that the earth would not be worked to exhaustion and so that accumulated wealth and land would periodically be redistributed rather than concentrated forever in a

few hands. God built limits into His creation and into His economy on purpose. A people who ignore those limits — whether ancient Israel or the modern industrial world — will eventually be corrected by the land itself, "for the land is mine," says the Lord, "for ye are strangers and sojourners with me" (Leviticus 25:23).

The secular observation that the world is running out of easily available resources and energy is, from a biblical vantage point, simply the natural consequence of a civilization that abandoned the Sabbath principle of limits, rest, and restraint. Solomon, wealthier than any king before or since, tried the experiment of unlimited acquisition and reported the result with unflinching honesty: "I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards... Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 2:4, 11). The Church does not need a resource crisis to teach it that unlimited consumption is vanity. Solomon already told us. But the resource crisis is a mercy — a hard providence that may finally get the world's attention, and the Church's too.

The Sabbath Principle: God's Original Economics of Limits

It is worth pausing on the Sabbath, because it is the most systematically ignored economic principle in the whole of Scripture, and it is precisely the principle a resource-constrained age most needs to recover. The weekly Sabbath was never simply a religious ritual; it was an economic policy, built into the very rhythm of the universe. "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work" (Exodus 20:9-10). A society that rests one day in seven, that lets its land rest one year in seven, and that releases debts and redistributes land one year in fifty, is a society structurally incapable of the kind of unlimited, compounding growth that defines the modern industrial economy. That was not an oversight in the divine design. It was the point.

Modern economics assumes, almost as an article of faith, that growth must continue forever — that a healthy economy is, by definition, a growing one, and that a year without growth is a crisis to be corrected. Scripture assumes the opposite: that a healthy economy is a *sustainable* one, bounded by rest, marked by enough, and structured to prevent the endless concentration of wealth that unbounded growth inevitably produces. The prophet Isaiah pronounced a woe on exactly this pattern of endless accumulation: "Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!" (Isaiah 5:8). A civilization organized around perpetual growth is, on this reading, not a triumph of human ingenuity but a very old sin wearing very new clothes.

II. The Fracturing of Globalism: When Babel's Towers Fall

For two generations the world has been told that ever-expanding trade, ever-tighter global integration, and ever-longer supply chains were not only inevitable but good — a kind of secular gospel of interdependence. In recent years that gospel has been faltering. Trade tensions between major powers, pandemic-driven supply shocks, wars disrupting shipping lanes and energy markets, and a resurgence of national self-interest have all exposed how fragile these long, thin threads of global supply really are. A container ship stuck in a canal, a chip factory offline on the other side of the world, a war in a grain-exporting region — and shelves empty out thousands of miles away. What was sold as resilience through interconnection has revealed itself, again and again, to be fragility through overextension.

There is an old story about this. "Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; let us make us a name" (Genesis 11:4). Babel was humanity's first great globalizing project — a single language, a single system, a single tower reaching toward self-sufficiency apart from God. And the Lord scattered it. Not out of spite, but because a humanity unified around its own name, rather than God's, was a humanity building toward disaster. There is something instructive for our own age in the fact that God's answer to centralized, unified human ambition was not to bless it into greater efficiency, but to disperse it into smaller, local, distinct communities — each with its own tongue, its own place, its own accountability.

This is not a case against all trade or all international fellowship — the New Testament church supported believers across the Mediterranean world through the collection for the saints in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8-9), and the gospel itself is meant to go to every nation (Matthew 28:19). But it is a case against treating a fragile, debt-fueled, hyper-centralized global economy as though it were the natural and permanent order of things, and against a Church that has quietly assumed the same dependence — that has stopped asking what would happen to its members, its ministries, and its mercy work if the shelves stayed empty for more than a few days.

The fracturing of globalism is not merely an economic inconvenience. It is a providential nudge back toward what Scripture has always assumed as normal: households, congregations, and towns that know how to provide for their own, that store up in times of plenty for times of want (Genesis 41:34-36; Proverbs 6:6-8), and that are not so entangled in distant systems that a disruption three oceans away leaves them helpless. "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished" (Proverbs 22:3).

III. Enough Is Enough: Recovering Godly Contentment in an Affluent Age

If there is one non-negotiable starting point for a Christian simpler way, it is this: material living standards in the wealthy world must become much less affluent, and this is not primarily an ecological necessity but a spiritual one. Jesus was blunt about the danger of accumulated wealth. "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). He told the parable of the rich fool who built bigger barns to store his abundance, only to hear God say, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee" (Luke 12:20). He warned that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:24) — not because wealth is evil in itself, but because wealth so easily becomes the thing the heart trusts instead of God.

Paul was equally direct with Timothy, a young pastor in a wealthy port city: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:6-10). Note carefully what Paul does **not** say. He does not say money itself is evil. He says the **love** of it is — and he defines the alternative not as poverty but as contentment: having food and covering, and being satisfied.

This is precisely what secular critics of consumer society have rediscovered, without the theological vocabulary to name it rightly: that a materially simpler life, focused on what is genuinely sufficient rather than what is merely available, tends to produce **more** human flourishing, not less — more time, more community, more peace of mind, less debt, less anxiety, less striving. The Christian has a name for this that the secularist lacks: it is the peace that comes from "seek[ing] ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," trusting that "all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33), rather than being "of little faith" (Matthew 6:30) about tomorrow's needs. It is the freedom Paul describes from personal experience: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content... I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:11-13).

American and Western Christians in particular need to hear this plainly: the affluence we have taken as a sign of God's blessing has, for many of us, become the very "thorns" Jesus warned about — "the deceitfulness of riches, and the cares of this world" choking the

Word so that it becomes unfruitful (Mark 4:19). A church whose members carry the same debt loads, the same accumulation of possessions, and the same anxious pursuit of upward mobility as their unbelieving neighbors has, in a very real sense, been conformed to this world rather than "transformed by the renewing of [the] mind" (Romans 12:2). It is time to ask, corporately and individually, how much less we could live on — and discover that the answer is liberating rather than frightening.

IV. The Return to the Household: Building Self-Sufficient Local Economies

Scripture's default economic unit was never the multinational corporation or the distant government bureaucracy. It was the household and the local community. The Proverbs 31 woman is not celebrated for her portfolio; she is celebrated because "she seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands... She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard... She maketh fine linen, and selleth it" (Proverbs 31:13, 16, 24). Her household is a productive economy — spinning, weaving, planting, trading locally — not merely a consuming one.

This same household-and-neighborhood economics runs through the early chapters of Acts. The believers in Jerusalem "had all things common" (Acts 2:44), and "sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need" (Acts 2:45); they broke bread "from house to house" (Acts 2:46), the ordinary domestic setting being the setting for the Church's economic life together, not an afterthought to it. This was not communism imposed from above; it was radical, voluntary, local generosity flowing from hearts transformed by the resurrection.

The observation that a sustainable, resilient society needs mostly small-scale, highly self-sufficient local economies — producing much of its own food, energy, and goods close to where people actually live — is not a new discovery of twenty-first-century ecologists. It is a return to the pattern God gave His people from the beginning: a garden to tend (Genesis 2:15), households that grew their own food, kept their own flocks, and traded surplus locally. The modern Christian family that grows a portion of its own food, that keeps a well-stocked pantry against hard times (Proverbs 21:20), that repairs rather than replaces, and that supports the small businesses and farms in its own town, is not engaging in a hobby or a nostalgia project. It is recovering something the Church has always known and modern convenience has caused it to forget: that dependence on distant, anonymous, profit-maximizing systems for the necessities of life is spiritually and practically fragile, while dependence on God, worked out through the labor of one's own hands and the mutual aid of one's own neighbors, is resilient.

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Genesis 3:19) was given as a consequence of the Fall, but it need not be experienced only as a curse. Paul commanded the Thessalonians "that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread" (2 Thessalonians 3:12), and warned that "if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). A congregation full of families who know how to produce, preserve, repair, and provide for themselves and one another is far better positioned — spiritually and practically — to weather economic disruption, and far better positioned to be the generous, giving church the New Testament describes, than a congregation entirely dependent on paychecks from distant corporations and food from distant supply chains.

V. One Body, Many Members: Cooperative and Participatory Local Community

The image Paul uses for the Church is not a corporation with a distant CEO, nor a crowd of isolated individuals, but a body — intensely local, intensely interdependent. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ... And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Corinthians 12:12, 26). This is not a metaphor for occasional Sunday fellowship. It describes a way of life in which believers "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers... And all that believed were together, and had all things common" (Acts 2:42-44).

Secular thinkers who have studied the collapse of community in modern consumer society reach, from a very different starting point, a conclusion the New Testament assumed all along: that human beings flourish in small, cooperative, participatory communities where people know one another, share resources, work side by side, and bear real responsibility for their common life — and that they wither in the anonymous, transactional, hyper-individualized arrangements of modern suburban and urban life, however materially comfortable those arrangements may be. Loneliness, anxiety, and despair have risen in lockstep with material affluence and social isolation across the developed world; the data confirms what the Word already told us — that "it is not good that the man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18), and that the isolated individual, cut loose from binding community, is not free but impoverished.

The Simpler Way that the world needs and the Body of Christ that the Word describes converge on the same practices: shared tools and resources rather than everyone owning their own of everything; regular working bees of mutual labor — the modern equivalent of barn-raising, harvest help, and the diaconal care the early church practiced (Acts 6:1-

6); small groups and house churches where believers actually know each other's needs; and local decision-making by people who understand their own neighborhood rather than distant, centralized control. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2) is not a sentiment; it is a description of an economy — an economy of mutual aid that cannot function at the scale of a nation or a corporation, but that functions beautifully at the scale of a congregation, a neighborhood, a small town.

VI. Redeeming Technology: Tools That Serve Rather Than Enslave

None of this is a call to primitivism or a rejection of technology as such. Scripture never romanticizes hardship for its own sake, and the Church has always used the tools available to it — Paul's tentmaking trade, Gutenberg's press, radio, and now the internet have all been pressed into the service of the gospel. The question is not whether to use technology but which technologies serve human flourishing and creaturely limits, and which enslave people to endless production, endless debt, and endless resource consumption.

There is real wisdom in the observation that a sustainable way of life requires much greater use of technologies that minimize resource use — simple, durable, repairable tools rather than complex, disposable, resource-hungry ones; solar and passive design rather than energy waste; hand tools and craft production, which is often more satisfying as well as more sustainable, alongside the necessary larger-scale industry that genuinely benefits everyone. This is simply wisdom applied to the material world, the same wisdom the Preacher commends when he observes that "the sleep of a labouring man is sweet" (Ecclesiastes 5:12) — that there is a kind of satisfaction in simple, tangible, well-made work that no amount of convenience can substitute for.

The Christian household that learns to grow food, preserve a harvest, mend clothing, build and repair with its own hands, and use energy sparingly is not opting out of technology. It is choosing technology that serves the household rather than technology that requires the household to serve it — that requires two incomes, constant debt, and a treadmill of replacement purchases just to keep functioning. "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another" (Romans 13:8) is very difficult to obey inside an economy engineered to keep everyone perpetually indebted for the newest version of everything.

VII. An Economy Not Made by Human Greed: Beyond Markets, Profit, and Growth for Growth's Sake

Perhaps the most radical of the observations under consideration is this: a genuinely sustainable and just society requires a fundamentally different economic system — one

not driven by market forces or the profit motive, and in which there is no perpetual growth. To many ears formed by decades of consumer-capitalist assumptions, this sounds almost heretical. But Scripture has never treated unlimited profit-seeking or unlimited growth as a virtue. It has treated them, again and again, as a danger.

James does not mince words: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you... Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth" (James 5:1, 4). Jesus states flatly, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24), placing the pursuit of wealth in direct, mutually exclusive competition with the service of God — not as one legitimate value among many, but as a rival master. The whole Mosaic Law is riddled with structural limits on unrestrained accumulation: interest-free loans to the poor (Exodus 22:25), gleaning laws that guaranteed the poor access to the harvest without charity being reduced to a market transaction (Leviticus 19:9-10), the prohibition of permanently alienating ancestral land (Leviticus 25:23), and the Jubilee that periodically reset the economic playing field (Leviticus 25:10). None of this is the modern market economy. All of it is aimed at preventing the very thing the modern market economy produces almost automatically: the concentration of wealth in a few hands and the permanent economic exclusion of the rest.

This does not require the Church to endorse any particular secular political program — Scripture does not hand us a blueprint for state-run economies any more than for unrestrained capitalism, and believers of good conscience will continue to disagree about policy. But it does require honesty about what the Bible actually says regarding wealth, growth, and the profit motive, which is considerably more suspicious of them than most Western Christian culture has been willing to admit. A local economy that measures success by whether all its members have a livelihood and enough to live well — rather than by whether output and consumption grow every year without limit — is far closer to the biblical vision of "enough for all" (compare 2 Corinthians 8:14-15, quoting the manna narrative of Exodus 16:18: "he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack") than an economy organized around infinite growth on a finite earth ever could be.

VIII. New Hearts for a New Way: From Competition and Individualism to Frugality and Contentment

Every structural change described above — smaller economies, local self-sufficiency, cooperative community, simpler technology, a different economic logic — depends

entirely on a prior change that no policy can produce: a change of heart. You cannot build a cooperative, sharing, sustainable community out of people who remain, at heart, competitive, acquisitive individualists. This is precisely what the secular literature on simpler living concludes, and it is precisely what the gospel has always taught: external arrangements cannot substitute for internal transformation. "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2).

The world's values — competition, self-advancement, individual accumulation, status through possession — are described in Scripture not as neutral facts of human nature but as "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," which "is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:16). John is emphatic: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). James is equally blunt: "know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

The alternative the New Testament proposes is not grim self-denial but a genuinely different set of satisfactions — exactly what secular observers of consumer culture have discovered when they note that people living simply, cooperatively, and frugally often report *greater* life satisfaction than those pursuing ever-more affluent lifestyles. Paul instructs Timothy to charge "them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:17-19). This is frugality that overflows into generosity, and generosity that becomes its own reward — a treasure "in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth" (Luke 12:33).

Peter calls believers "strangers and pilgrims" and urges them to "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11) — language that assumes Christians are, by definition, out of step with the consumption patterns of the surrounding culture, not comfortably assimilated into them. Paul tells Titus that grace teaches us "that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:12). Soberly — the old word for a mind not intoxicated, not carried away by appetite, including the appetite for more.

None of this is possible by willpower or moral self-improvement. It is the fruit of the Spirit, cultivated in community: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness,

faith, meekness, temperance" (Galatians 5:22-23) — every one of which is a value directly opposed to the anxious, competitive, acquisitive spirit of consumer culture, and every one of which flourishes far more easily in a slower, simpler, more communal way of life than in the frantic pace most affluent Christians currently accept as normal.

IX. Be Fruitful and Multiply: Choosing Family Growth Over GDP Growth

If the wider culture measures a nation's success by Gross Domestic Product, the Church has always been given a different measure of increase. The first command given to humanity was not to maximize output but to be fruitful: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 1:28). The Psalmist celebrates children not as an economic cost to be minimized but as the truest form of wealth: "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward... Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them" (Psalm 127:3, 5). "Children's children are the crown of old men" (Proverbs 17:6).

It is a striking irony of the modern age that the wealthiest societies in human history have, in the pursuit of ever-higher GDP, ever-greater consumption, and ever-more career achievement, produced some of the lowest birth rates ever recorded — nations quite literally consuming their own future in exchange for present affluence. A Simpler Way, by contrast, is far more hospitable to family and children than the current arrangement: lower material demands mean lower costs of raising a family; a slower pace and more local, cooperative community mean more hands to help with childcare, more generations living near one another, and less of the isolating nuclear-family-against-the-world pressure that makes children feel, to many young couples today, like an unaffordable luxury rather than a heritage from the Lord.

The Church should be leading the way in recovering this vision, not following the world's lead into treating children as an obstacle to career and consumption goals. "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it" (Psalm 127:1) — and the house the Lord is most interested in building is not a bigger one, but a fuller one. A Christian household that chooses simplicity precisely in order to welcome more children, to have a parent more available at home, and to raise the next generation in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4) rather than handing that formation over to daycare and screens purchased with dual incomes, is living out the Simpler Way in one of its most countercultural and most fruitful forms.

X. A Call to the Church: Practical Steps Toward the Simpler Way

Scripture is not content with abstract exhortation; it moves to practice. What might a Simpler Way look like, concretely, for a local congregation and its families? A few starting points, offered not as law but as wisdom for prayerful consideration:

Reduce and share. Downsize deliberately. Share tools, vehicles, and equipment among households rather than every family owning its own of everything. Establish a congregational tool library or resource pool, echoing the "all things common" of Acts 2:44.

Grow and preserve. Cultivate a garden, however small — a windowbox, a backyard plot, a church community garden. Learn to preserve a harvest. Recover the household as a place of production, not merely consumption, as the Proverbs 31 household modeled.

Work with your hands. Recover craft, repair, and basic self-sufficiency skills — cooking from scratch, basic carpentry, mending clothes, home maintenance — both for their practical resilience and because "the sleep of a labouring man is sweet" (Ecclesiastes 5:12).

Build local, face-to-face community. Prioritize small groups, house churches, and neighborhood fellowship over merely programmatic, arms-length church attendance. Organize working bees — practical days of shared labor helping members of the congregation with home repair, harvest, moving, or caregiving — recovering the mutual burden-bearing of Galatians 6:2.

Give generously and locally. Support local farmers, tradespeople, and small businesses, especially those within the church family, before defaulting to the cheapest distant option. Practice the "collection for the saints" model (1 Corinthians 16:1-2) of ongoing, structured generosity toward those in need within the body.

Get out of debt and stay out. Treat "owe no man any thing" (Romans 13:8) as a serious financial discipline, not a nice sentiment — living on less than one earns, saving deliberately, and refusing the perpetual upgrade cycle that consumer culture demands.

Raise children as a priority, not an obstacle. Structure household finances and vocational choices, as much as possible, around welcoming and raising children well, rather than around maximizing dual-income consumption.

Teach the next generation. Involve children in the practical work of the household and the congregation — gardening, building, cooking, caring for the elderly — as genuine

education, not merely as chores, recovering something closer to the apprenticeship model of discipleship Jesus practiced with the Twelve.

Store against a day of trouble. Keep a reasonable household pantry and emergency provision, following the wisdom of Joseph in Egypt (Genesis 41:34-36) and the ant in Proverbs (Proverbs 6:6-8), without falling into either presumption or fear.

Above all, seek first the kingdom. Every one of the above practices is empty if it becomes a new law, a new source of pride, or a new anxiety. The entire point of the Simpler Way, biblically understood, is to free the heart to "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matthew 6:33) — not to create a new, more elaborate performance of righteousness through austerity.

XI. A Word of Grace: This Is Freedom, Not a New Law

It must be said plainly: none of this is a formula for earning God's favor, and none of it should become a new legalism by which believers measure and judge one another's spirituality. Paul warned the Colossians against exactly this danger — teachers who imposed ascetic rules ("Touch not; taste not; handle not"), which "have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body," but which are, in the end, "not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh" and carry no power to actually transform the heart (Colossians 2:21-23). Simplicity pursued as a new law is just consumerism's mirror image — pride dressed in plainer clothes.

The Simpler Way, rightly understood by the Christian, is not a burden but a release — the same release Jesus offered when He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28, 30). The yoke of consumer society — the endless work to fund endless consumption, the endless comparison, the endless debt — is a heavy one, whatever its glossy advertisements promise. The yoke of Christ, worn out in simple, frugal, generous, communal living, is by comparison astonishingly light.

XII. Answering the Objections

Any call to a Simpler Way meets, understandably, a set of common objections. They deserve honest answers rather than dismissal.

"Isn't this just socialism dressed up in Bible verses?" No. The Simpler Way described here is not the seizure of private property by a centralized state; it is the voluntary, Spirit-led generosity and cooperation of free people bound together in love —

precisely what the Jerusalem church practiced without any state compulsion at all (Acts 2:44-45, Acts 4:32-35). Ananias and Sapphira were not condemned for keeping back part of the price of their land — Peter tells them plainly, "whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?" (Acts 5:4) — they were condemned for lying about it. Voluntary generosity, not compelled redistribution, is the New Testament's economics.

"Doesn't Scripture say wealth is a blessing from God?" It sometimes is (Deuteronomy 8:18, Proverbs 10:22). But the same Scripture warns relentlessly about the dangers wealth brings with it (Deuteronomy 8:11-14, 1 Timothy 6:9-10, James 5:1-3) and never once equates net worth with spiritual standing. Abraham and Job were wealthy and godly; so were the rich fool and the rich young ruler, and wealth did neither of them any good. The question Scripture asks is never simply "how much do you have," but "what has your heart made of what you have."

"Isn't withdrawing from the global economy a retreat from gospel mission?" Quite the opposite. A church less enslaved to debt, consumption, and career advancement is a church with more time, more margin, and more resources for evangelism, missions, and mercy ministry — not less. The apostle Paul supported himself by tentmaking precisely so that he could preach the gospel "without charge" and be free from entanglements that would compromise his mission (1 Corinthians 9:12-18, 1 Thessalonians 2:9). Simplicity is not isolation from the world's need; it is freedom to serve it without the world's chains.

"Won't a simpler, no-growth economy mean less charity, less medical progress, less help for the poor?" The secular case for a Simpler Way explicitly denies this, arguing that most of what a genuinely needy world requires — food, shelter, health, dignity, community — can be provided far more cheaply and locally than current wasteful, growth-obsessed economies manage, while resources presently wasted on advertising, luxury, planned obsolescence, and military spending could instead flow toward genuine human need, including research into things that matter, such as medicine. The biblical vision of "enough for all" (2 Corinthians 8:14-15) has always aimed at sufficiency and equity, not at the sheer volume of goods produced.

"Is this really practical, or just an idealistic dream?" It is no more idealistic than the early church itself, which held all things common, cared for its widows, orphans, and poor without state assistance, and spread across the Roman world on foot and by ship with no advertising budget, no venture capital, and no growth targets — only obedience,

love, and the power of the Holy Spirit. What was practical for Pentecost's three thousand converts is not impractical for us.

XIII. Discussion and Reflection Questions for Personal or Small Group Study

1. Where in your own household budget and habits do you see "the deceitfulness of riches" (Mark 4:19) crowding out spiritual fruitfulness?
2. What would it look like, practically, for your family to reduce dependence on distant supply chains and increase local self-sufficiency this year?
3. Read Acts 2:42-47 and Acts 4:32-35 slowly. What elements of that community's economic life feel most foreign to how you currently live? What is one step toward recovering them?
4. In what ways has your congregation quietly measured spiritual health by the same metrics — growth, size, budget — that the world uses to measure economic health? What might it look like to measure faithfulness instead?
5. Genesis 1:28 commands fruitfulness and multiplication. Honestly examine: has your pursuit of material comfort or career advancement shaped decisions about family size or the welcome of children?
6. What is one skill of practical self-sufficiency (gardening, cooking from scratch, basic repair, food preservation) that you could learn or teach this season?
7. 1 Timothy 6:6-10 defines contentment as having "food and raiment." What would it cost you, emotionally as well as financially, to genuinely live by that standard?
8. Who in your church or neighborhood could you begin sharing tools, skills, or produce with, in the spirit of Acts 2:44?

Appendix: Scripture for Meditation on a Simpler Way

- Genesis 1:28 — the call to fruitfulness, not mere production
- Genesis 3:19 — labor as vocation, not merely burden
- Exodus 16:16-18 — manna and the wisdom of "enough"
- Exodus 20:8-11 — the Sabbath as economic law
- Leviticus 25:1-23 — Sabbath years, Jubilee, and the limits on accumulation
- Deuteronomy 8:11-18 — the warning against forgetting God in abundance
- Psalm 24:1 — the earth is the Lord's
- Psalm 127:1-5 — children as heritage, not burden
- Proverbs 6:6-8 — the ant's wisdom in provision
- Proverbs 22:3 — the prudent foresee and prepare

- Proverbs 31:10-31 — the productive, generous household
- Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 — the vanity of unlimited acquisition
- Ecclesiastes 5:10-12 — the sweetness of honest labor, the emptiness of more
- Isaiah 5:8 — the woe on endless accumulation of land and houses
- Isaiah 55:1-2 — why spend money for what is not bread
- Jeremiah 12:4 — the land mourning under human greed
- Matthew 6:19-34 — treasure in heaven, seeking the kingdom first
- Matthew 11:28-30 — the easy yoke, the light burden
- Matthew 13:22 — the deceitfulness of riches choking the Word
- Matthew 19:16-24 — the rich young ruler
- Mark 4:19 — cares of this world and deceitfulness of riches
- Luke 12:13-34 — the rich fool, and the call to seek the kingdom
- Acts 2:42-47 — the pattern of the early church's common life
- Acts 4:32-35 — no one lacked, because all shared
- Romans 8:18-22 — creation's groaning for redemption
- Romans 12:1-2 — non-conformity to the world, renewal of the mind
- Romans 13:8 — owe no one anything but love
- 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 — the body, one and interdependent
- 2 Corinthians 8:1-15 — generosity, equity, and "he that had gathered much had nothing over"
- Galatians 5:16-26 — the fruit of the Spirit versus the works of the flesh
- Galatians 6:2, 9-10 — bearing one another's burdens
- Ephesians 6:4 — raising children in the Lord
- Philippians 4:11-13 — the secret of contentment
- Colossians 2:20-23 — the warning against man-made asceticism
- Colossians 3:1-5 — setting affection on things above
- 1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19 — contentment, the love of money, and true riches
- 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12 — quiet work and self-sufficiency
- Titus 2:11-14 — grace teaching sober, godly living
- Hebrews 4:9-11 — the rest that remains for the people of God
- Hebrews 12:28 — receiving an unshakeable kingdom
- Hebrews 13:5, 14 — contentment, and seeking the city to come
- James 4:1-10 — friendship with the world as enmity with God

- James 5:1-6 — the warning to the rich who have hoarded
- 1 Peter 2:11-12 — strangers and pilgrims abstaining from fleshly lusts
- 1 John 2:15-17 — love not the world
- Revelation 18:1-5 — the call to come out of Babylon's excess

Conclusion: The Kingdom That Cannot Be Shaken

The secular case for a Simpler Way rests on the observation that the present arrangement cannot continue — that resources are finite, that globalized systems are fracturing, that a different, smaller, more local and cooperative pattern of life is coming, whether by wisdom or by crisis. The Christian has every reason to take that observation seriously, and every reason to see in it the hand of a God who has never approved of Babel's ambitions or Babylon's excess. "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen," John writes of the world's economic and idolatrous system in its final form, warning God's people to "come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:2, 4).

But the deeper Christian case does not depend on resource scarcity, supply-chain fragility, or any other contingent fact about the present global economy. It depends only on the unchanging character of God and the unchanging call of the gospel. "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Hebrews 13:14). "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Hebrews 12:28). Whether the world's systems hold together for another century or fracture within a decade, the call to God's people remains exactly the same: to live simply, to hold possessions loosely, to work with our hands, to love our neighbor as a member of one body, to raise up godly children, to store treasure in heaven rather than on earth, and to find our contentment, our security, and our joy not in the abundance of what we possess, but in the God who possesses us.

It is time for a Simpler Way — not because the world has run out of resources, though it may have; not because globalism is fracturing, though it is; but because the God who made us for Himself has always called His people out of Egypt's abundance and into the wilderness, out of Babylon's markets and into the New Jerusalem, out of the treadmill of more and into the rest that remains for the people of God (Hebrews 4:9). "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). May the Church have ears to hear, and grace to obey.

"Godliness with contentment is great gain." 1 Timothy 6:6