Series Road Map: Less is More

**Series Overview:** We hear it all the time, “less is more”. We all that one guy who has way more than us already but always seems to get more. But then we find ourselves wanting after everything around us, too. When we don’t have Christ as our very center, we attach ourselves to insane amounts of stuff. We crave things that we don’t need, and that we don’t even enjoy. Jesus calls us to simplicity, because the answer to our cravings is actually quite simple: Jesus.

**Weekly Overview:**

· It’s simple. It’s not saying try to make treasure and your heart align…it’s the reality that where your treasure is, your heart is. So, where is your treasure?

o Matt. 6:19, 21 “Do NOT store up for yourselves treasures on earth.” “For where your treasure is, there your heart WILL be also.”

o Practical steps

 Buy for practicality or others, not self-status

 Give away the things you’re addicted to

 Create a habit of giving things away

 Give away what keeps you from Jesus

**Grab the Room (Intro):**

**Tension (What’s the Struggle): Why pursue Jesus for later when we can have stuff now?**

**Text (+ Supporting Text): Matt 6:19-24**

**THP: Less in the World is More in Heaven**

**Supporting Points (Not Required):**

**Application (Call to Action):**

· Practical Steps: pick one of these to exercise for the 30 days. Write it down. (Could create phone backgrounds for them to screenshot with these, SM posts to share/challenge their friends, could make it a text sign up for one of the four & you’re reminded 3x/week, etc…)

o Buy for practicality or others, not self status

o Give away the things you’re addicted to

o Create a habit of giving things away

o Give away what keeps you from Jesus

**INTRO**

Hey everyone - welcome to Northview Students! My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am so glad that you are here, whether it’s your first time or you have called Northview home your whole life. I am really excited about tonight but first, I want to start by listing a few facts that you might find surprising. Check these out:

* There are around 300,000 items in the average American household (LA Times)
* The average American home has nearly tripled in size over the last 50 years (NPR)
* Offsite storage rental is the fastest growing commercial real estate industry in America (NY Times)
* Only 3.1% of the world’s children live in the U.S., but own 40% of toys sold annually (UCLA)
* The average American home has twice as many television sets as it does people (USA Today)
* 25% of people that have a two car garage don’t have any room to park a car in it (U.S. Department of Energy)

**BIG** Some of these are just absolutely mind blowing. I could go on but we don’t have enough time to truly grasp the reality of how much STUFF we have as people. We are living in a culture where having the nicest, newest things is idolized by most and a life of true simplicity is often regarded as ‘prudent’ or ‘cheap.’ We have become so inundated by a world that is constantly producing and upgrading and advertising to the point where we just HAVE to have it. Whatever ‘it’ is.

Tonight we are kicking off a new series called “Less is More” which is centered around addressing the very real problem of materialistic idolization that has increasingly plagued our world more and more with every passing year. Otherwise said, we have A LOT of STUFF. We have looked outwardly at those stats mentioned just a few moments ago. It’s fun to think of how ‘crazy other people are’ when it comes to this topic. But over the next several minutes together, I want to challenge you to lean in and consider how this conversation can relate to YOUR life - look internally and see what God is trying to do tonight.

**PRAY**

Matthew 19:16-26

“Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?” “Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied, “there is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments.” “Which ones?” he inquired. Jesus replied, “You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother and love your neighbor as yourself.” “All these I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I still lack?” Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it is for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?” When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

A lot to unpack in that chunk of verses. There is a lot of heavy stuff and things of eternal significance to look at here. This story starts off with a man, who is never named, coming to Jesus and asking him the question “what good thing must I do to have eternal life?” which I think reflects the unfortunate misconception we see so often in our world today - that doing good things gets us into heaven. But this question is important because this shows that this man is someone who believes in who Jesus is. He is living during the time of His ministry on earth and has the chance to walk up face to face with the Messiah and ask how to get to Heaven. You don’t go up to someone and ask them a question like that unless you believe without a doubt that they have an answer. First Jesus answers by saying that in order to go to heaven, you must keep the commandments. You must live the way I have instructed you to live! Which the man has and he makes sure that Jesus knows it. And personally, I think this is where the rich young ruler expected the conversation to end and Jesus to say “well then you will have eternal life!” But Jesus then identifies the very thing that is keeping this man from walking with Him and says to the man ‘sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.’ That was too much for him. That was the line - his possessions.

Where do you draw the line at following Jesus? **PAUSE/REPEAT** What is keeping you from walking in step with Him on a daily basics - specifically when it comes to the THINGS we have. Is it your phone? Clothes? New car? I fear that a lot of us in this room have the right idea of following Jesus and love the thought of it but when it comes time to sacrifice for Him, we walk away. What is it about these inanimate objects that can so often keep us from a very living God? Author of *Essentialism,* Greg McKeown points to this idea that has been growing in our world on a DAILY basis of “you can have it all!” This idea has become so mainstream in our advertisement industries that the “American Dream” has quickly deserted the idea of equal opportunity and doing what you love and become this need for more. More things, more money, more fame, you get the idea.

John D. Rockefeller, founder of the Standard Oil Company, was the first American billionaire in recorded history. A BILLION. And the difference between a million and a billion is A LOT. For reference, a million seconds ago was last Tuesday. A billion seconds ago was the year 1991. This man had A BILLION DOLLARS which would be worth around 2.15 billion dollars today - and when he was asked “How much money is enough money?” he responded by saying “Just a little bit more.” This mindset has even infiltrated that of the greatest quarterback in NFL history! Tom Brady was asked after winning his 6th Super Bowl ring, which one was his favorite. His response? “The next one.” This puts into reality what it is we are really chasing after in this lifetime.

**TENSION** “\_\_\_\_\_, are you saying that having stuff is bad?” Please hear me on this, having material possessions and being blessed financially is NOT an inherently bad thing. There are a lot of people who have worked very hard, love what they do and are able to comfortably support a family. That is an amazing blessing. The problem arises when we begin to idolize those things. When we begin to prioritize ‘the grind’ for what we receive in return. **BIG** The problem begins when we are chasing after the next thing that will eventually break, erode and rot away instead of chasing the source of eternal life.

**TRUTH** Matthew 6:19-21 says “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

**The reality here is that LESS IN THE WORLD IS MORE IN HEAVEN.** We are called during our life on earth to bypass treasures and kingdoms of the world and sacrifice in the now for an eternal future. You can see that rewards aren’t evil. It’s not bad to be chasing a reward - God wants to give them to His children! But the rewards worth chasing are the ones we won’t see in this lifetime.

How different would the rich young ruler’s life have looked if he had heard this statement and taken it to heart? I truly believe that we would have had 13 disciples instead of the 12 had this interaction gone differently. This man was called by the Son of God to follow Him on His journey but declined because he couldn’t prioritize TRUE living over what he had understood to be ‘the good life.’ I think this begs the question of what a true disciple must be willing to give up in order to follow Jesus. And the answer to that is EVERYTHING. You look at the 12 that were called and you’ll see they left their jobs, their wives, their children, their parents, their homes, and took with them the clothes on their backs. How different would OUR lives look from this day on if we were to take Matthew 6:19-21 to heart?

Story where you overcame material possession idolization

I used to idolize material possession security - and if I’m being honest, it is still a struggle that I have standing up here today. I don’t want to seem like the person that has this figured out completely, but I have been able to take steps in this area. When I was coming out of college, I was on track to go get a Master’s and Doctorate in Counseling Psychology. And up until that point in my life, money had been the driving factor of my career dreams and study choices. I used to want to be a pro baseball player. I used to want to be a dentist. I dreamed of hitting the lottery and made lists of what I would do/buy with that money instead of focusing on what I could ACTUALLY set goals to. I was ready to cash in and be set for life by opening my own youth counseling practice and not needing to worry about money for the rest of my life. Then one day, God came knocking. I had recently gotten involved with my church back home in their youth program and loved every second of it. I had gotten opportunities to teach and realized I loved that as well. I loved how it was going until God placed on my mind that He is calling me to do this full time. No part of me wanted that. Meaning - no part of me wanted to have my potential salary cut by 80%. I loved the rest of the job but that part was too much for me to give up. That was the line that I drew. I wrestled with this for months and tried to run away from this feeling that I am called into something that didn’t make a bunch of money. Then I read Matthew 6:24 “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

I had a choice to make. Will I serve God? Or will I serve money? Will I put my head down and continue into what is safe and secure or will I venture out into the unknown and forfeit my dreams of being rich? The reality was, I had a complete misunderstanding of what it meant to be secure. I had it in my head that money and things would fix every problem that arose in my life. I had it in my mind that the true path to a good life was that of multiple commas in my bank account. So, I took, what a thought was, a risk. I got the courage to say ‘yes’ to following Jesus and leaving the other idols at the altar. He was calling, and I made my choice. And that choice must happen daily – you must consciously choose each and every single day to prioritize Jesus over what the world can give you in the short term.

What will your choice be? Will you choose your things or will you choose Jesus who is sticking out his hand in anticipation for you to take it and follow him at the potential expense of those things? The rich young ruler made his choice and he turned from that invitation. As we see throughout the rest of that story, he was never named and we never heard mention of him again outside of this one interaction. I can’t help but think what could have been for him in his life if he were able to set aside his treasures stored up here on Earth and walked with Jesus instead. Where are those possessions of his now? They’re lucky to even be dust at this point. And in 2,000+ years, what we value will be the same. Everything you see around us will have more than likely resorted to being nothing more than trash on the earth.

**APPLICATION** So what? What do we do about it? If you are serious about your willingness to leave what has been accumulated in this lifetime so far, I am going to give you an opportunity to carry that out. This is not going to be for everyone. There are some of you in this room that are still trying to figure out if following Jesus is worth it. And that’s okay, keep this in mind. But those of you that ARE READY, we are going to participate in a 7-day cleanse of our attachments to our things. Over the next 7 days, I want you to commit to finding something each day that you are willing to get rid of. Sounds easy right? Well, let’s make it count. I want you to identify things in your life that have taken precedence over your relationship with Jesus and is distracting you from it. What I’m going to ask you to do is make a pile of 7 things by the end of the week next week and bring those things to service next Sunday. And this is not just a ‘break’ from these things, you are GETTING RID OF THEM. Because **Less in The World is More in Heaven.** This can be one of the first steps to overcoming your obsession with things the world tells you to be obsessed with. During this next week, pray each day and ask God to place an item on your heart and step out in obedience and rid yourself of it.

**INSPIRATION**

I want to take us back to the scripture verse. Specifically where it says “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Do you understand the weight of that statement? Where is your heart? What does it belong to? There is an honest conversation to be had here with yourself and with others to surrender your desires for material possessions and pursue the true treasures of heaven. Let’s take action and lead the way to model what it looks like for us to ACTUALLY sacrifice and surrender at any cost by starting with our stuff. Hold each other accountable, ask what your friends are getting rid of and I can’t wait to see this stage full of things that we have idolized but are leaving behind in pursuit of the Lord.

PRAY