

# COS Growth Group Sermon Study

**Series:** *Simplify*

**Week 1:** *Your Priorities*

**Scripture:** Mark 8:34–38

## **Purpose for Growth Groups:**

Growth Groups exist to help people take their next steps in their spiritual journey. This study invites honest conversation about priorities and creates space for grace-filled reflection, not guilt-driven change.

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## **Opening Prayer (Leader or Volunteer)**

God of grace,

Thank you for bringing us together tonight. As we begin this new year, we ask you to help us slow down and listen. Show us where our lives are out of alignment with your heart, and remind us that change begins with your grace, not our effort. Help us encourage one another as we learn to follow Jesus in simpler, more faithful ways. Amen.

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## **Icebreaker (5–10 minutes)**

**Optional prompt — choose one:**

- What is one thing that tends to fill your calendar faster than you'd like?
- What is one habit or activity you wish you had more time for?
- When life gets busy, what is usually the first thing that gets pushed aside?

*(No fixing, no judging — just listening.)*

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## **Sermon Summary (Read or Paraphrase)**

In this first week of *Simplify*, we explored how easily life becomes overextended without us ever planning it. Drawing from Ecclesiastes, King Solomon reflects on a lifetime spent chasing knowledge, pleasure, success, and wealth — only to conclude that none of them provide lasting meaning on their own.

Jesus offers a different way. In Mark 8:34–38, He invites His followers to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him. This is not about punishment or loss, but about **choosing what truly matters**. Every “yes” we say is also a “no” to something else, and Jesus calls us to make those choices intentionally.

The sermon outlined four guiding practices for a simpler, more meaningful life:

- **Strategic Engagement** – intentionally saying no
- **Intentional Devotion** – saying yes to Jesus
- **Focused Investment** – investing in what lasts
- **Generous Living** – giving our lives wisely

A simpler life isn’t about doing less for the sake of comfort — it’s about aligning our priorities with the way of Jesus.

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## Key Takeaways for Growth Groups

- Most of us don’t become overextended overnight — it happens gradually.
  - More options and more stuff often lead to more stress, not more joy.
  - Our true priorities are revealed by our time, spending, and attention.
  - Following Jesus requires intentional choices, not just good intentions.
  - Grace comes before change — always.
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## Understanding the Vision (Big Picture Questions)

1. Why do you think Jesus begins discipleship with *saying no to ourselves* rather than adding more spiritual activities?
  2. How does Ecclesiastes help explain why so many “good things” still leave people feeling empty?
  3. Which of the four lessons from the sermon best captures what Jesus is inviting us into as a church this year?
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## Personal Reflection & Group Conversation

1. Where do you most feel the tension between good things competing for your time and energy?

2. When you look honestly at your schedule or spending, what surprises you about your priorities?
3. Is there one area of life where you sense God inviting you to simplify — not out of guilt, but for freedom?

*(Leaders: allow silence. Reflection often needs space.)*

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## Living It Out (Next Steps for the Week)

Invite group members to choose **one**, not all.

- **Name One “No”**  
Identify one habit, commitment, or distraction you need to loosen your grip on.
  - **Schedule One “Yes”**  
Put something life-giving on your calendar this week (rest, prayer, relationship, serving).
  - **Do a Simple Check-In**  
Ask yourself once this week: *What got my best time and energy today?*
  - **Practice Quiet Generosity**  
Serve, give, or encourage someone without posting, explaining, or expecting credit.
  - **Pray the Same Simple Prayer Daily:**  
*“Jesus, help me say no to what pulls me away and yes to following you today.”*
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## Closing Prayer (Group Prayer)

Jesus,

Thank you for inviting us into a better way of living. We release the pressure to do everything and choose instead to follow you faithfully. Give us clarity, courage, and grace as we learn to live simpler lives together. Help us support one another as we take our next steps. Amen.

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## Leader Note (Optional to Share with Hosts)

This week is about **awareness, not perfection**. If people leave with one honest insight and one small step, the group has done exactly what it was meant to do.