

THE CRY

for Simplicity



Word
MADE
flesh

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We celebrate *Simplicity* as a privilege in identification with Jesus and the poor.

THE CRY is an **advocacy publication** of Word Made Flesh that invites readers to **learn and share** in the **stories of our friends** who suffer under poverty and injustice.

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IN THIS ISSUE

From the Editor.....2	Friends of WMF: On the Way 9	Meet our Staff: Annie Jones 15
A Letter from the Executive Director.....3	A Simple Mission 11	Meet Our Staff: Esdrienne Cohen..... 15
Simplicity: The Way of Subtraction.....5	The Celebration of Simplicity.13	Learn More: On Simplicity.....16
A Lesson so Great and so Small.....7	Support WMF14	All Our Hope Made Good in Christ..... 17

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From the Editor

It is such a pleasure to introduce to you this issue of *The Cry*. One of the most enjoyable aspects of my work with Word Made Flesh is that of seeing our lifestyle celebrations come to life through the stories of our folks around the world and the people with whom they do life together.

The work of Word Made Flesh celebrates simplicity as a privilege in our process of identifying with Jesus and the poor. In my own life over the past year, I have experienced God using simplicity to hone in my priorities and teach me how to increase my celebration of the riches I have in Jesus.

Roughly one year ago, my wife and I transitioned from a life of relative security to a simpler life. We moved from Louisville, KY to Wilmore, KY so that we could pursue ministry. (Both the work I do with Word Made Flesh, and additional non-profit work we do with disadvantaged youth and families locally.) With this move came many trade-offs. We traded our nice, downtown apartment home for a basement apartment meant for traveling missionaries. We traded well-paying jobs for work that paid less. We traded in that which we knew and felt stable for that which was unknown and lacked security.

And then I encountered the people and the stories of Word Made Flesh only to realize I had not “achieved” simplicity in the slightest, not when I compare my life in the U.S. and comforts of Christianity in the West to the lives lived out as told in the pages of this issue. It’s not a competition, of course, but what has become so clear is that there is nothing about our culture or our society at large that encourages or promotes in any way living simpler lives. We’re told to want more things, to achieve more; we learn to fill our lives with clutter and then wonder why we generally exist in such states of stress and overload.

This is not the Gospel we were called to. What we have found over the last year is that in celebrating greater simplicity in our lives we have experienced greater

riches in Jesus. In His simple living, Jesus was filled with the Spirit of the Living God. He carried peace and was rich in mercy and compassion. As we join Him, He makes all of these things and much more available to us.

In our decluttering and quieting of our lives and hearts, we are better able to identify with who He is and what His heart is for the lost and broken.

Jesus came for the least of these, and He came to reconcile them back to the Father through His blood on the Cross. As I once was one of the least of these in spirit, it is so key, so important that we stand in solidarity with the least of these all across the world through our commitment to celebrating simplicity.

Jesus in Luke 10 instructs us to be like Mary, the sister that sat at her Lord’s feet. This was the good portion that no one could ever take from her, while Martha ran around anxiously making things more complex than they needed to be.

In this issue of *The Cry*, you’ll see folks who have spent much time at the feet of Jesus, so in love with how simple the Gospel is that they live and work to bring others to sit at Jesus’ feet with them. I pray that as you read these stories and stand with us in solidarity and identification with “the least of these,” you would be moved to examine the ways you can celebrate simplicity in your own life. I pray that in the process you’ll find rich peace and abundant grace.

JORGE CASTORENA

Editor, *The Cry*



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From the Executive Director

Matthew 6:33a — “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness...”

This issue of *The Cry* is focused on our Lifestyle Celebration of **Simplicity**.

Considering this, perhaps I should just create a pithy haiku and call it good for this reflection.

Well, I'll at least compose a haiku on simplicity to begin:

with Simplicity
even great complexity
finds a still Center

Perhaps I should comprise this reflection of just the one word that says so much – Love?

After all, “God is Love.” What could be more simple?

Indeed; and yet, many of your minds are likely already formulating responses that begin something very similar to, “yes, but...”

Of course, the difficulty is that **simplicity**, apparently and ironically, can often seem to be anything but simple.

All kinds of people suggest all kinds of ways to understand and practice simplicity. The variations can quickly become confusing and defeating. In this manner, a great possible good becomes yet another anchor burdening body and soul.

So a question arises: how do we simultaneously keep simplicity healthily simple and substantively robust?

Author Richard Foster shares about this conundrum of the complexity of seeking Christian simplicity, naming four paradoxes and offering suggestions for finding viable pathways for journeying¹:

“Obedience to God, living into Love, is to live into the practice of Christian simplicity.”

1. It is both a grace and a discipline. The possibility of simplicity is a grace/gift from God. There are practices that can increase the likelihood of creating conditions in which the gift can best be received and experienced. This is similar to the biblical relationship between faith & works.

2. It is both easy and difficult. Like in other areas of life, as I like to say, “practice makes better.” Processes that have become regular through practice began to seem like they are “second nature.” Until practices become regular the path can be grueling.

3. There are both inner and outer dimensions. Efforts toward external simplification without internal change of orientation will prove largely vacuous. Yet, inner change without some forms of external modifications also rings hollow. The two must affect each other at some level.

4. The affirmation of the goodness and limitation of material things. Christian simplicity is ultimately neither stringently ascetic nor materialistic, but instead walks a path between these poles. That is, Christian simplicity seeks to remain thankful for the goodness of the gift of creation by the Creator and doing this requires Christians to remember that creation's use is for the flourishing of all people not just some people. As Foster writes, “Misery arises not only when people lack provision but also when they

try to make their entire lives out of provisions.”² See Philippians 4:11-13 as a helpful passage here.

Foster concludes his reflection on the paradoxical nature of Christian simplicity by stating,

“Christian simplicity does not yield to simplistic answers. It is the ability to be single-hearted and at the same time sensitive to the tough, complex issues of life. It is a strange combination and quite difficult to explain, though quite easy to recognize. There is focus without dogmatism, obedience without oversimplification, depth without pride. It means being aware of many complex issues while having only one issue at the center—obedience to Christ.”³

So, for Foster, Christian simplicity can to some extent be summed up at its core as a singular focus on “obedience to Christ.” Obedience to Christ is what motivates the work and living of Word Made Flesh communities and staff around the world – it is that simple (and that complex). Living into obedience to Christ encompasses our whole lives, but it in itself is a simple directive. What is obedience



A moment of joy at the market (WMF Argentina).

to Christ? In one of its simplest forms, it is Loving God and loving neighbor. As we come to love God, then we will love ourselves well because God created us and saw that this was very good; we know that God loved the world enough to send His Son into it to be its Redeemer. Once we love God and ourselves, we will love our neighbor because our neighbor, like us, is also created and loved by God. Relatedly, Scripture tells us that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. We are to act toward others in the same manner that we would wish others might act toward us.

Like Foster, another writer – Dietrich Bonhoeffer – who gave his life during the Holocaust of World War II, reminds us of the possibility of living into simplicity before God and others, “To be simple is to fix one's eye solely on the simple truth of God at a time when all concepts are being confused, distorted, and turned upside-down.”⁴ Obedience to God, living into Love, is to live into the practice of Christian simplicity.

There are external aspects that manifest in our lives when we live into simplicity. However, simplicity is less about any external particularities and more toward

an internal centering of who (and Whose) we are at the core of Our Being. Simplicity at its essential nature is less about internal or external abundance or lack and most about the wholeness of a person. Like the hymn writer, can we at any time say, “It is well with my soul?” Can we sing, “when peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll; whatever my lot Thou hast taught me to say, ‘it is well, it is well with my soul.’”?

While it's important to think about and practice various aspects related to simplicity of life, all of these factors move toward health if we get the key component in place, if we come to know that it is well with our soul.

Affirming this orientation, Belden C. Lane in *Backpacking with the Saints: Wilderness Hiking as Spiritual Practice*, shares that, “When we imitate someone else's way in the world, we lose touch with the quiet center that is ours.” In order *not* to lose touch with our own quiet center, it is vital to remember that “knowledge is the servant of wonder.” So, continue to learn, friends, but remember that learning at its core is meant to be about increasing your wonder of the immeasurable Love of

God. If you do this, you'll find yourselves walking in and into simplicity as God means for you to do so. Your journey will likely look both somewhat similar and also a bit different than others who are walking into simplicity. That's okay. Trust God to lead you in paths of righteousness for His namesake as you walk together through life.

In this issue of *The Cry* Word Made Flesh staff and friends share stories of walking with the concept of simplicity as part of our lives and we offer some resources that we have found meaningful. In so sharing, we hope to clear away a few of the cobwebs, to unburden some of the weights that beset, and offer some added accessibility and clarity to the concept of simplicity. I hope that the stories and reflections you encounter in this issue further encourage you to lean-in to this wonderful charism of simplicity that is from God and available for all people.

May the Love of the Lord encompass you, uphold you, and infuse all that you do.

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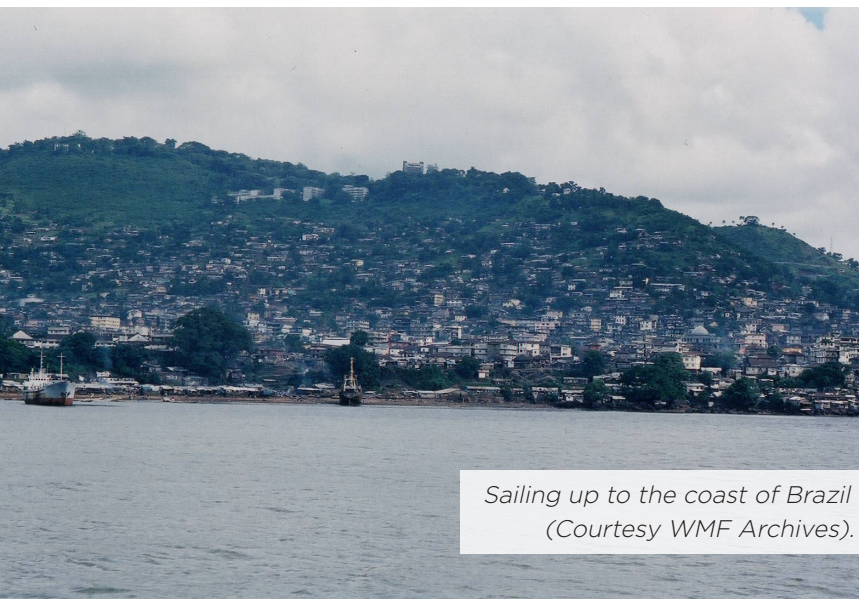


¹ Foster, Richard. (2018, July 18). *Four Paradoxes of Christian Simplicity*. Retrieved from www.renovare.org

² Foster

³ Ibid.

⁴ Bonhoeffer, D. (1995). *Ethics*. New York, NY: Touchstone. p. 70



Sailing up to the coast of Brazil
(Courtesy WMF Archives).

Simplicity: The Way of Subtraction

By Ryan Kuja, *Field Director, WMF Colombia*

While Meister Eckhart, the late 13th and early 14th century Christian mystic, wrote, “God is not found in the soul by adding anything, but by a process of subtraction.” The soul doesn’t grow into God by adding more, but by taking away that which stands in the way.

In much the same way, it is a process of subtraction that invites us to let go of the excesses in our outer lives which act as hindrances to the experience of joy, peace, and flourishing for ourselves and our communities. Society shouts, “Be better! Achieve more! Go faster! Don’t ease up until it’s done!” At the same time, the divine whispers, “Small is beautiful. Imperfect is human. You are enough. The moment is enough.”

The sense of “enoughness” is a doorway into a spirituality of simplicity, in which we can cultivate a lifestyle rooted in the simple way. In a world that values speed and efficiency and surplus, the practice of simplicity is countercultural and subversive.

For the past 9 months, Katie and I have lived in Medellin’s Comuna 13, which not long ago was known as the most dangerous neighborhood in the the most dangerous city on earth. Much has changed for the better in recent years, but violence is still an everyday reality here. Back in April, there was a spree of gang-related murders. Bodies piled up in the streets. Schools were closed. Businesses shut down before dark. Our neighborhood was all but empty, besides the soldiers who patrolled on foot day and night. A tenseness hung heavy in the air. People were afraid. There was talk of a return to the era of lawless urban warfare of the past.

Gratefully, the outbreak of violence subsided quickly and life returned to normal. Kids went back to school. Shopkeepers again kept their doors open after dark. The collective anxiety subsided as the rhythms of the neighborhood were restored. I began to notice something: the simple, daily routines suddenly took on a sense of beauty. What had seemed mundane before now appeared as profound.

(Opposite) Viviana and her mother at their new ice cream shop. Having settled in Santo Domingo fleeing from war and violence, they represent over 6.5 million internally displaced people in Colombia, the second highest displaced population of any country.

COLOMBIA



Simplicity humanizes cultural and societal ideals which so often are centered on accumulation, striving, and success. The

In a world that values speed and efficiency and surplus, the practice of simplicity is countercultural and subversive.

simple way invites us into seeing all of life as unmerited gift. Intentionally cultivating simplicity invites a new way of seeing in which abundance is a reality and nothing is only what it appears to be.

Children banter as they walk hastily toward their classroom. A puppy barks at someone passing by on the sidewalk. The sun sets ablaze the sky in a fiery red tinged with soft wisps of lemon yellow. The smell of fried fish wafts through the open front of the local seafood restaurant.

The practice of simplicity reminds us that none of it is ordinary, and all of it is passing. We experience whatever it is that the moment offers. And then we let it go. The essence of simplicity is releasing all that comes our way. Intentionally living simply reminds us that moments cannot be stored up, saved in an account, or accumulated. Like a fish, they are caught and released.

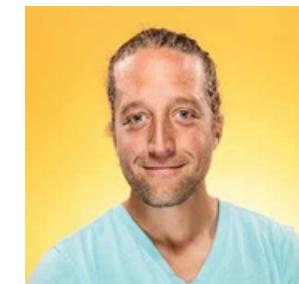
They are not ours to have, only ours to hold for but a moment, and let go. This invites awareness of the abundance that is, shifting attention from what is absent to what is present.

The process of subtraction deepens and matures as we refocus again and again on what is in front of us. What is here, now.



ABOUT RYAN:

A global citizen with a background in international mission, relief, and development, Ryan Kuja has lived in fifteen cities and rural villages on five continents. He holds an M.A. in Theology and Culture from The Seattle School of Theology and Psychology as well a Diploma in Humanitarian Assistance from Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. A spiritual director and writer, he has written for Sojourners, Missio Alliance and several theological journals. His first book, *From the Inside Out: Reimagining Mission, Recreating the World*, released in June 2018. Ryan is currently serving as the Field Director of Word Made Flesh in Medellin, Colombia, where he lives with and works alongside his wife, Katie.



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The sun emerging after a period of rain over Medellin at WMF Colombia.



A Lesson so Great and so Small

By Anna Monteviller,
Field Director, WMF Peru

It was a day like any other at our community center, a day in which we would have our time of workshops with the boys and girls that we reached in the Grau area, most of them artists who work singing on buses to live.

The boys were arriving little by little, and just as I was coming to the door again, one of the girls came into the workshop. It was my friend Sara, with her little Josué who gave me a quick smile and then ran inside, where he knew he would find toys. That little one was about two years old, and until recently was not comfortable around me; he was not comfortable around most people and was very attached to his mother.

On this day, I did not know it yet but God had a lesson prepared for me.

Arrival time was over and we moved on to serving breakfast. At the sound of “Everyone to the table, we are going to pray,” the table was filled with boys and girls, and of course my little friend Josué, who could not find a place among so many adults and worked trying to find a place to sit. Finally his mother saw him and called him to her side. “Josué, come here.” I looked for a chair and I helped him get in it. But today everything would

be difficult for Josué, because just as he was going to sit down his little fingers were smashed against the chair, and his eyes welled up with tears. They were going to read a Bible verse before praying for the food, but his cry quenched any attempt at reading.

I have not mentioned this until now, but that day I arrived at the [center] with a strong headache and I was tired from a bad night. But there was my friend Josué crying disconsolately in his

**On this day, I did not know
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prepared for me.**

mother’s arms. I knew that maybe inviting him to go out to the garden and playground, to his favorite place, would calm him down. That would mean that I would have to be playing with a tireless little one, with my headache and my tired back, but I still tried. And it worked out.

(Opposite) Photo courtesy WMF Archives. (Below)
Anna with friends and volunteers during a day out in
one of Peru’s most vulnerable and at-risk zones.

“Josué, do you want to go out? You want to go play in the garden? Let’s go!” I extended my hands and he accepted. I carried Josué towards the garden and I began to smell something strange, and very strong. It was not a dirty diaper, it was even stronger. That increased my headache, and the options were either to leave my little friend or continue by his side for few more steps.

At that moment someone told me that Josué had vomited earlier. It only took me a few seconds to see that his clothes were wet and poorly cleaned from the vomit. And yet, Josué was happy, smiling at me as we started to walk. We explored the garden as if it were the first time he visited it, and I no longer smelled that smell on his clothes, though mine were already “perfumed” with it.

At each step of our walk he extended his little hand toward mine. When he calmed down (a few minutes later) we went back to meet with the group so that Josué could have breakfast. I realized that my rejection of that strong smell and the fear of getting dirty had disappeared and I did not care anymore. Josué was happy, and he wanted his bread with eggs and milk with Milo for breakfast. We had just entered the dining room for the time of prayer for food, which began with reverence in prayer, and I clumsily did not think to guide Josué to do the same, I only worried about reaching his bread and milk. But then after a few seconds he began to look at everyone, and I realized they were praying and so I put his hands together. That alone was enough for my little friend to bow his head, close his little eyes, and pray. That picture was a great blessing to me, and through that little one, God showed me how He continues to work and beautifully forms our lives.

What I saw in Josué that morning were his little clothes covered in vomit, but God saw something else. He saw a little one to bring up, a little one to distract and cheer up with the nature that He created. God saw a little boy who had already learned to converse with Him.

The simplicity that I celebrate is that I realized that morning Josué was not the one who was really dirty, it was me. Like many of us in ministry, I continue to fail and make mistakes every day, big and small, but in the mercy of God we receive such grace and care from Him as He trains us for the task. This is the Gospel – we are just little ones in need of mercy, and the Father is kind and receives us as we are and takes us to His garden of salvation and peace.

What a great and simple teaching Josué gave me that morning, my little friend of two years of age.



PERU



@Palabrahechahombre



ABOUT ANNA:

Anna Myriam Monteviller Pino was born in Lima, Peru. She grew up in Christian home. She is licensed in tourism having studied Marketing and Publicity. In 1998 she met and became friends with the Directors of WMF Peru who encouraged her to serve among the most vulnerable and at-risk members of society. She believes that God gave her a prophetic and evangelistic calling to the church and to God’s people to exhort them towards following Jesus’ example of caring for the poor. She has participated in and worked with the Word Made Flesh Peru community for over 10 years, first as the Vice President of the board of “La Palabra Hecha Hombre” and director of the Job House, then as the Programs Director and most recently as the Field Director.

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On the Way

Photo and reflection by Keith A. Barker

For me, experiencing South Africa was full of complexity. I found it difficult as a photographer to translate into images all that I saw and felt of the human condition while visiting there. This photograph, *Tension: On the Way to Robben Island*, unexpectedly came as close as I could have imagined to encompassing these emotions. Comprised simply of two elements—sky and water—as seen from a ferry off the coast of Cape Town, the many human tensions I found dividing and defining this fascinating country come to mind: rich and poor; old and new; freedom and slavery; remembering and forgetting; reconciliation and retribution; shadow and light.

Though it could have been taken anywhere sea and sky meet, this particular scene is nearly the one Nelson Mandela might have taken in as he set off to Robben Island, where he spent nearly thirty years in prison. A simple view that may well have been the backdrop of a painful and complex uncertainty he felt as he thought of the likelihood of a bleak future for himself and for his country.

More recently, I pondered the simplicity of another two elements. These two elements, bread and wine, are in this case meant to unify rather than divide. I had the privilege this week, in our small church, of bearing the chalice as fellow parishioners dipped their bread in the wine. As they did so I repeated, “*This is the Blood of Christ; the Cup of Redemption.*” I saw each face as it strode past, some eyes evading mine, others looking to me as if I were more important than I am, perhaps just because I held the Real Presence. I watched as fingers dipped the bread in every possible way. Some were sloppier than others and I was aware of a bit of the blood of Christ left on my hand. I raised the chalice for those taller than I, and bent over for the children so as to let them remember as well. I noticed there were crumbs floating as I repeated for each one, tall or small, “*...the Blood of Christ, the Cup of Redemption...*”

It surprised me. The gravity of this ordinary reality became real as I became a part of each individual’s remembrance. It was a most holy moment of the service, yet it was also ordinary and sort of messy. This ordinary act—sharing bread and wine in order to remember uses bread as symbolic of Christ’s body, underscoring his confession of being the Bread of Life. The poetic significance of this proclamation might be lost on those who eat modern bread that has been conditioned and preserved. But good bread doesn’t last long. Bread made with flour, water, yeast and salt has always had as its mission mouths to fill, and by its nature is best eaten soon. Wine on the other hand is made from crushed fruit—and time. These two accessible items shared at the table in unity are the ingredients Christ says are to initiate and perpetuate a remembrance of Him.

Yet while this act of remembrance points to the unity of the participants, it is also fraught with tension. Eucharist is from the Greek word for thanksgiving. The most heartfelt thanks comes as a byproduct of (if not at least a reflection on) pain and suffering. Remembering is a holy act. An historic, wide-angle view of this simple act of remembering Christ at the table with his friends sharing simple ingredients is also full of complexity and tension. Amid even the most painful circumstances, it provides hope for anyone looking ahead in uncertainty. Likewise, taking in even something as simple as sea and sky can recall God’s faithfulness and presence, to help with facing what may lie ahead.



Keith A. Barker spent his early childhood in Tokyo, Japan, the son of missionary parents. His lineage includes many career missionaries who served in various countries in Africa. While working in many facets of photography—from film cameras to more modern digital varieties—his work centers around people, places and objects that relay a sense of history and time’s passage. In 2013, he received a travel fellowship to South Africa along with twenty other artists from North American and African countries. The collective results comprised a group art exhibit that traveled all over North America through 2018. Currently Professor and Art & Design Department Chair at Asbury University, Barker has taught Photography and Graphic Design since 2000. Keith lives near Wilmore, Kentucky with his superb wife and partner Bethany, and three wonderfully adroit children.

A Simple Mission

By Benjamin Grimm, *Field Director, WMF Papua New Guinea*

We have well established the principle of simplicity with Scripture, that we do not live above our neighbors or apart from them. We live among them, accepting what is offered and granting the peace of that dwelling upon them. We make friends, and we become good neighbors.

In reading Matthew 10:7-10, perhaps it is best to ask why Jesus commanded his 12 apostles, and later the 72 disciples, to carry nothing with them. There were several wealthy sponsors within the group of followers Jesus had with Him. It is reasonable to suggest they were financially capable of supporting all those who went out to heal, raise the dead and share the good news. Jesus was not necessarily noted for His frugality or miserliness, nor was much recorded about His expenses. With the knowledge of wealthy sponsors, it is also likely the decision was not based on a lack of funds. Perhaps the command was intended to set an example. Perhaps it was another object lesson, like the multitude of others God placed before Israel.

He told them to “... proclaim as you go, saying ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand’. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, [and] cast out demons.” Certainly this required courage and trust, in which the participants were totally reliant on those they came to help. Was it purely for the sake of disciplining His followers to remember who provides for them while showing a lost Israel the loving God who had never deserted them? What does it say to the community that a given disciple enters when they have nothing and accept all that is offered? What is the lesson they take from it?

Let’s talk about the simplicity of this context. They had no Roman education, grassroots aqueducts, literacy drives or business co-ops. The only had this: the mission to

give Israel its chance to become the nation of priests it was intended to be and to heal those in need. Anyone can do that, and perhaps that was the point. While each of us is gifted in unique ways, we are all called to bear an “easy yoke” and a “burden [that] is light”. The general commandment to proclaim the Kingdom is not for the few but for everyone. Perhaps it is easier to look at our individual giftings as auxiliary tasking while the primary goal is seeking and saving the lost. If I am a preacher, then I find great purpose in filling that role but my job description begins as missionary.

When we talk about this concept of simplicity, the translation to everyday life can be confusing, especially at the offset. Is our implementation of that too ostentatious? Are we flashing too much wealth if we have any given item for our ministry work? I confess to several in-depth discussions with Mary about appropriate technology brought out to the Sepik in Papua New Guinea. Are we living simply if we have more than our neighbors? Are we fulfilling our mission if we are doing little more than surviving? What do you truly need to seek and save the lost?

The reality is that we must never forget that for all the plans we make, we are little children trying to help Daddy change the pistons in the engine. It’s a complicated job far beyond our ability to assist, but He lets us hold the wrenches anyway because He just loves us to pieces. Jesus had a mixed bag of zealots, fishermen, tax collectors and wealthy merchants. None of them were scholars or priests, and in some cases they were illiterate. Regardless, they were the recipients of great power and authority and through them the church was

established and multiplied many times over. Jesus could have made things happen all by Himself, but He chose to use a handful of obedient people because they came near to Him. This is our King.

I suggest that these commands of our King are a reminder that we don’t need material possessions, education, a certain funding level, a perfect sustainable plan, or a three-year goal to prosper. We can and should be good stewards of what He entrusts us with and plan accordingly. Yet, there are times when we are so quick to jump in and make plans, and it is so important that we submit our plans fully to Him and let Him be in charge. He doesn’t need our plan, but occasionally indulges us because He can make all things work together for our good.

Our work often becomes more complex than we would like. For many of us who are in ministry, it easy to get bogged down by all of the complications and even obligations. In our efforts to meet the physical needs of those we came to serve and to live among them in relationship, it can be easy to forget the simplicity of the Gospel and its mission. We are called to care for the souls of the lost; through love and presence, we are called to spread the Good News and our Father’s Kingdom. This is what Jesus did for us — He saved our souls — and now we respond to Him by embracing this simple truth and sharing it everywhere we go.

Through Jesus’ many parables, actions, and plain language, the responsibility to care for those struggling with poverty, infirmities, and under oppression is clear. No one is exempt from acts of charity. Jesus healed the sick when He was exhausted, hungry, and thirsty because “He had compassion on them,” until He had fully poured out. He did it because He loves extravagantly, and that’s as simple as it gets.

My words have not been intended to drive home a theological stance but only an opportunity for each of us to examine the “why” of Simplicity. Can you look at any aspect of your life and confidently assert its value and adherence to simplicity? Does it make sense? Was it carefully considered or, like us buying chocolate when we are having a strong craving, was it a bit of indulgence?

I pray that you would ask our King for wisdom as you discern what it looks like to live with simplicity. I pray for this wisdom for myself. Lord knows I need it, too

Do the crazy, simple thing, brothers and sisters. It’s always, ALWAYS better.



ABOUT BENJAMIN:

Mary and Benjamin Grimm are working as WMF staff alongside the Yamano people of Papua New Guinea. Mary focuses on creating adult literacy programs and completing a translation of the Bible in Yamano. Benjamin focuses on addressing medical and economic needs. They live with their daughter, Joya, in a remote village in the East Sepik Region. The Grimms look forward to partnering with the Yamano in establishing a long-term Word Made Flesh community



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(Left) Oyi Rosalyn often carries great amounts of food and firewood on her head.

(Right) Half the village turns out to see the emergency medical float plane come in.





The Celebration of Simplicity

By: Sarah Baldwin, WMF Advisory Council Chair;
Vice President of Student Development and Dean of Students, Asbury University

Emily is working hard to learn to walk. I watched my other two children learn to walk, and I see how Emily's process is much more slow and intentional because of her delayed development with Trisomy 21.

But Emily is focused on her goal. Probably a hundred times a day she practices standing up, balancing, attempting to get a new perspective on the world and then usually she lands on her bum. She is an excellent crawler and she speeds around the house, navigating all the things in her path. But anyone can tell that Emily is ready for a new perspective that is beyond shoes and ankles.

Shifting our perspectives takes intentionality and work. One perspective that I am holding with prayer is how I view the needs of the world. Like most of us, I am frequently overwhelmed by the great needs around the globe. I find myself avoiding the news of another crisis and rushing past social media articles on another atrocity.

As I go about my daily life of work and caring for my family, I can feel paralyzed by the world's injustice, violence and suffering. The complexity of issues that immerse us weighs me down and makes my heart heavy and my mind despairing. I want to hold the suffering that I am called to hold and do the work I am called to do. But the complexity and need are overwhelming. I feel like I cannot do anything to change the injustice so I want to shut it out and not think about it. How do I move forward and keep my center with compassion and advocacy when the world around me is disorienting and overwhelming?

The Word Made Flesh community has given me a great gift of perspective. The celebration of simplicity reminds me that the way of Christ is simple, not overwhelming. The perspective of Christ is freedom, not paralyzation. The practice of simplicity reminds me that Christ's work is with those who experience poverty, suffering and abuse. Christ holds all the suffering and all the hope of the world in his hands. When I practice the celebration of simplicity, I

recognize that I am small, finite and human. I put my trust in Christ and do not have to carry the injustice myself.

When my perspective shifts from me having to carry and hold the suffering of the world to trusting Jesus with the suffering, I find my center again. Like Emily, I experience a new perspective. I am freed to do the work that I am called to with simplicity and focus and great intention. Instead of my perspective being everything I am not doing or cannot be, I lean more deeply into the simple way of Christ who allows me partnership in doing justice as an act of grace, not a heavy burden.

I am learning to walk. Slowly, with intention, I find my feet and my balance as I move forward in a complex world with a simple trust in Jesus.

*We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing this.
This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.
It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning,
a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.
We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.*

From A Future Not Our Own
A poem written in tribute to Oscar Romero

(Opposite) A woman carrying her son at WMF Bolivia.



ABOUT SARAH:

Dr. Sarah Thomas Baldwin is a graduate of Asbury University, Asbury Seminary with a Masters of Divinity and George Fox Evangelical Seminary with a Doctor of Ministry in Leadership & Culture.

Sarah has a calling to prepare students to serve Christ by being people of influence and transformation in their families, communities and churches for the sake of those who are most vulnerable. Sarah serves at Asbury University as the Vice President of Student Development and Dean of Students. Her passion is wholeness and holiness in leadership and formation. Sarah preaches and teaches often as part of her ministry and leadership. Sarah is married to Clint Baldwin. They have three children, Madi, a junior in college, Kai, age 6 and Emily who is almost 2.



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Meet our Staff



Annie Jones
Short Term Programs
Coordinator, WMF Rwanda

Annie was born and raised in Texas. She grew up going to the beach on days off from school and to Sea World most summers. She quickly developed a passion for the ocean and marine life, inspiring her to get a degree in Marine Biology. As she entered her last year of undergrad God flipped her life upside down, completely changing her course of direction. She gave her life to Christ as a young child, but at the age of 22 she realized that she had never completely surrendered her whole life to God. She prayed a similar prayer that Isaiah said in Isaiah 6:8, saying, “Here I am Lord, have your way in my life.”

She began her journey with Word Made Flesh in the fall of 2012. After going on servant team to India, and spending a year serving in Kolkata with WMF, Annie felt God was calling her to Rwanda. She has been serving in Kigali Rwanda since 2016.

Annie is thankful that she has supportive parents who love that she is following after God’s desires for her life. She enjoys having weekly “family” dinners and game nights with her roommates and close friends in Rwanda. And, whenever given a chance, she loves getting up close and personal with marine mammals, sharks, and all other sea creatures!

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WMF STAFF



Esdrianne Cohen
Field Director, WMF Brazil

Esdrianne was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She was raised by her paternal grandparents. In her home, biblical, Christian teachings were rigidly taught, and she accepted Jesus as her savior when she was a young girl.

At age 13, Esdrianne moved to live with her mother, where she was introduced to another side of life, and she rebelled against how she had been raised. She became involved in previously prohibited activities, like spiritism (Macumba). After the suffering that came with experimenting with this style of life, one day she decided to change her life. After hearing a preacher on television, Esdrianne remembered her past and the teachings of her grandparents, and she asked God for a second chance. Together with her daughter, Isabella, Esdrianne began a new life. In 2003, she was introduced to Projeto Vidinha, which is a philanthropic institution that cares for children who live on the streets.

In 2004 Esdrianne discovered Word Made Flesh through the work at Projeto Vidinha and she eventually began to assist with their street outreach. In January of 2007, she became the first Brazilian to become part of WMF Brazil. Esdrianne is the coordinator of Projeto Ester, which focuses on women and their children. “I’ve seen the hand of God in the lives of these women and I am happy to know that they are opening their hearts to the Lord.”

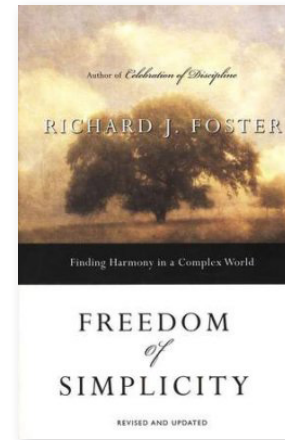
Today, Esdrianne is the Field Director and coordinator for Word Made Flesh Brazil. She lives simply to serve and obey the will of God.

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ON SIMPLICITY

As we reflect on this lifestyle celebration, we invite you to explore some of our staff top picks from media and resources that deal with the topic of simplicity.

Read



RICHARD FOSTER’S classic work on simplicity explores this discipline throughout Christian history and the Bible and examines it in practice. Known for his warm and accessible style and rich background in spiritual formation, Foster helps us rethink our priorities, reminding us in tangible, meaningful ways to “seek first God’s kingdom and his righteousness.” He shows us how to live in harmony in a complex world while stressing relationship between simplicity and prayer and solitude. It is a book that leads readers into the practice of simplicity.

Read



SHUSAKU ENDO’S masterpiece novel on enduring faith in dangerous times is widely considered one of Christendom’s most influential works of the 20th century. Set in seventeenth-century Japan, a country hostile to Christianity, two Portuguese Jesuit priests travel as missionaries, where feudal lords force Christians to publicly renounce their beliefs. Eventually captured and forced to watch their Japanese Christian brothers lay down their lives for their faith, the priests bear witness to unimaginable cruelties that test their own beliefs.

Contemplate

“JESUS CHRIST and all the writers of the New Testament call us to break free of mammon lust and live in joyous trust...They point us toward a way of living in which everything we have we receive as a gift, and everything we have is cared for by God, and everything we have is available to others when it is right and good. This reality frames the heart of Christian simplicity. It is the means of liberation and power to do what is right and to overcome the forces of fear and avarice.”

Quote from Richard J. Foster’s “Freedom of Simplicity: Finding Harmony in a Complex World”

LEARN MORE

Watch



MARTIN SCORSESE directed this film adaptation of Shusaku Endo’s “Silence” (story synopsis below). Scorsese developed this project for over 25 years and successfully tackled the challenge of taking a classic novel to the big screen. The film went on to be nominated for Best Cinematography at The Academy Awards.

From the film:

“I thought that martyrdom would be my salvation. Please, please, God, do not let it be my shame. The Lord is my refuge, and my deliverer. My God is my helper, and in Him will I put my trust. Of the Blood, all price exceeding, shed by our immortal King, destined for the world’s redemption.”

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All Our Hope Made Good in Christ

By Ken Dean, *Director of Finance and External Accounts Administration, WMF International Office*

It began with a vision. Eight years ago, I felt called to a time of prayer and fasting. In the middle of the night, I had a vision of a woman pointing to a map and saying, “Bodaway.” It didn’t make any sense. When I got up, I checked google maps and found that the only place in the world with the name Bodaway is a mesa in Arizona. Google maps, however, didn’t show anything there. I then shared the vision with my wife who said we needed to go and check it out. So, we flew to Arizona from our home in California, and drove out to this corner of the world, which is on the Navajo reservation. The mesa is 3-miles off a paved road and there we found lots of sheep and one little white church. We went in and met Pastor Billy, his wife Rose and his sister Joyce – the leaders of the church. The service was uneventful, and we were uncertain that this was the place God was directing us to, but on the way out Joyce, an elderly lady, told us that they have been praying for God to send them someone to help with the children. Later, as our family was pulled off the side of the road, praying for confirmation, we

looked up to see Pastor Billy driving by and a rainbow was ending in the back of his pickup truck. This amazed our family and it seemed that God was confirming the vision.

After receiving counsel and encouragement from our church leaders, we planned another trip. My primary hope for the trip was to discover how to love the Lord with all my heart, mind, soul and strength. Not knowing what we could do practically, I searched the internet. I learned that people in the area had died from hypothermia the year before because they couldn’t get out to buy coal and food. The few ways that we could help were to deliver Thanksgiving boxes and blankets to families, and organize activities for children. We didn’t know if we had enough money to put together boxes for all the families. We kept returning to the ATM machine for more money, simply whispering a prayer to the Lord for all our needs to be met. We were able to give boxes to all the families and when I returned home, I discovered that we had \$1.53 leftover. We had just enough! And \$1.53 reminded us of the 153 fish that the disciples caught after casting their nets on the other side of the boat (John 21). Our hopes are made good in Christ.

We visit our friends in Bodaway three to five times a year,

We can’t *meet* all of their needs, but Jesus *will*.

delivering Christmas boxes, organizing revival meetings, and running vacation bible schools – we call them sheep camp. I continued to ask the Lord what else we need to do with the realization that we must expand our understanding of ministry in a cross-cultural context. Although it was very challenging, we surrendered to the Lord our house, our properties, and our place of living next to parents and grandparents. We sold our real estate and moved to Kentucky where I enrolled in the intercultural studies program at Asbury Seminary. We left our known home in California, but have been delighted to feel at home in Kentucky. All our hopes are made good in Christ.

Rochelle, our friend, advisor and translator in Bodaway, said that sometimes people have come and helped but then left and were never to be seen again. The poverty in Bodaway is extreme. We can’t meet all of their needs, but Jesus will. What we can give is ourselves. It’s not all about time and money but about presence and place. Our hope is to see a younger generation rise up to lead the local church, to see freedom from addiction and abuse, and to see reconciliation. Sometimes the Navajo that we encounter on our trips have a significant disdain for us – the Anglo. Often on our visits, we experience verbal abuse around town. Yet, some of those who have rejected us in the past are now those who work with us. We have experienced reconciliation, and ultimately, we desire that they be reconciled with God – something we also have been able to witness.

Last Thanksgiving, I led a small team to Bodaway. An old time Fleshy, Kyle, felt impressed by the Spirit that on Sunday God would bless us in a new way. Now, Kyle didn’t know which Sunday. To make matters more complicated, another member of the team who is gifted in preaching is named Sunday. On the third day of our visit, which was Sunday, God moved. Sunday, the preacher, spoke. After the message, we were asked to pray for one of the elderly women in the congregation. Pastor Billy

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NAVAJO NATION



(Above) Jewelry made by Rose, the wife of Pastor Billy at the church on the reservation. (Opposite) Man from the Navajo tribe near mesa rock formations in Arizona.

gave us oil for anointing. Then many people came forward, even more were in the pews weeping audibly. One of the biggest surprises was having a rowdy Navajo boy, come forward to lay hands on the elderly with us. He is from a traditional home that resists Christianity, but he joined us in the true worship of our Creator. All our hopes are made good in Christ.



ABOUT KEN

Ken joined Word Made Flesh in 2015. He spent nearly 20 years enjoying various finance roles that specialized in corporate strategy. In 2013, Ken, a fifth-generation-native Californian, moved to Wilmore, Ky., to attend Asbury Theological Seminary. He loves to work outside and worship with his wife and four children. He has served as a church board member, treasurer, and school board member. Ken is deeply committed to WMF’s Christian mission, and serves regularly on the Navajo Nation in Arizona, USA. Ken and his wife, Cindy, live in Versailles, KY, and have four children.



“How many undervalue
the power of simplicity!
But it is the real key
to the heart.”

—William Wordsworth

Lifestyle Celebrations

Intimacy We celebrate intimacy with Jesus to be our highest calling and our created purpose.

Simplicity We celebrate simplicity as a privilege in identification with Jesus and the poor.

Obedience We celebrate obedience as our loving response to the grace of Jesus.

Submission We celebrate submission to Jesus, each other and the poor.

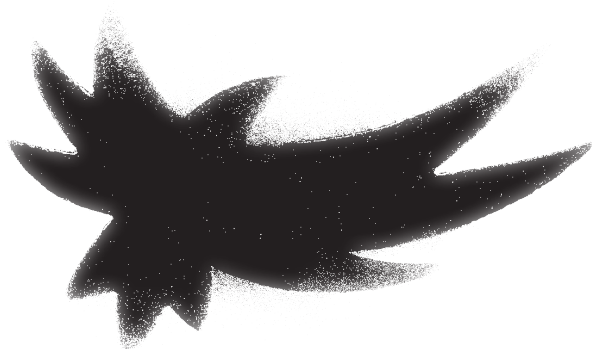
Humility We celebrate humility before God and humanity.

Brokenness We celebrate brokenness as our responsibility in ministry among the broken.

Community We celebrate community as a means for discipleship and service.

Suffering We celebrate suffering as a willing sacrifice in serving Jesus.

Service We celebrate service as an expression of our fellowship.



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