

Day 22

Simplify Your Home: Less is More

Have you ever felt a strong desire to make home life easier? Deep down you want to spend your time playing with your children and hanging out with your husband, but it seems there's always something else to do—clean, organize, cook, do the laundry, clean again. The cycle never ends.

All of those other things are important, but maybe there's a way for them to take *less* time so you can do *more* of the *most* important things.

Maybe it's time to simplify your home.

Our lives tend to be cluttered with too much—whether it's outside commitments or items in our households. All these things lead to anxiety, frustration, and even depression when we feel like we can never keep up. We spend our time taking



care of the things instead of the people God has entrusted into our care.

You've heard the saying, "Less is more!" When it comes to simplifying your home this couldn't be truer. Having less to take care of means you'll have:

- More mental energy. It's really amazing how much of our mental energy is consumed by trying to manage too many things at once. We tend to shut down with too many choices and we feel tired when faced with too much to do.
- More physical energy. It's just common sense: it takes a lot of physical energy to be a Proverbs 31 woman! She was known for making "her arms strong" (Proverbs 31:17). So imagine what it does to us if we add more than God ever intended. What happens when we've accumulated so much that it consumes more physical energy to take care of than we can spare?
- More time. Less stuff to take care of equals more time. Less outside commitments equals more time—more time to spend with family and friends. It's really that simple.

Getting Rid of the Unnecessary

The best way to simplify is to remove the unnecessary.

Unnecessary:

- 1) not needed
- 2) more than is needed, excessive

What do you have that you don't need? What do you have that you have an excessive amount of even if you need some of it? Here's a list to think through:

- **Recipes & cookbooks.** Have you ever heard of “analysis paralysis”? You can't decide because you're overwhelmed with choices. With Pinterest, cookbooks, family recipes... we now have too many choices when it comes to the question “What's for dinner?”
- **Books.** What is too many for some is way too few for others! If you are actually reading them, then great. If you have ones that have sat for years on your shelf untouched while you add more, it's time to stop and ask if it's worth it.
- **Email.** Do you feel anxious when you see the number of unopened emails in your inbox? Is it hard to find what you actually need? Practice the art of unsubscribing.
- **Decorations.** Some call them nicknacks, others call them chatzkies. Have you ever looked up the definitions of nicknacks? According to the dictionary a nicknack is *a small worthless object, especially a household ornament*. If you have decor that makes you smile, by all means enjoy it! But if the time it takes to dust and clean it is overwhelming—reconsider how *much* you need.
- **Toys.** A few well chosen, quality toys that promote imaginative play will give your kids so much more joy and you so much more sanity.

- **Clothes.** Some top executives at big companies literally have a “uniform” that they go to each day, so that they don't have to waste mental energy on those types of decisions. Steve Jobs of Apple was known for a black turtleneck, blue jeans and sneakers *everyday*. It was a way to avoid decision fatigue! You may not need to go to that extreme, but the idea of a uniform can simplify your life.
- **Household items.** How many sets of sheets do we really need? How many kitchen gadgets? Is a specialty cleaner for each type of cleaning really necessary?
- **Outside commitments.** Technically this might not be a way to simplify your home. But when we are too busy fulfilling our commitments that take us away, then our homes will get out of control quickly. Being a Proverbs 31 woman means you need time to dedicate to the running of your household. That doesn't mean you don't do *any* outside things (the Proverbs 31 woman certainly did!). It means you are intentional and selective.

Tips for Decluttering

1. Ask yourself some simple questions to evaluate what to keep and what to get rid of.

- Do I really need this? Does it make life harder or easier?
- Do I use this on a regular basis?
- Does this give me anxiety or a sense of joy?
- Do I have something similar that can do the same job?
- Can I borrow or trade instead of owning (this works great for books!)?

2. **Stop keeping things for the future.** Most women have a variety of sizes of clothes in their closets. We often struggle letting go of something we might use later. Of course we don't want to be wasteful, but how often *do we actually need the thing later?*

3. **Simplify meal planning by setting up a meal rotation.** If you love trying new recipes then sure, set aside a night each week or month to experiment. But overall, sticking to a set of recipes you know your family likes will make it easier. You may even want to have seasonal rotations to take into account the weather (who wants to cook when it's over 100 degrees outside???) and seasonal produce that will be available.

Simplify Your Home

One thing you don't want to do is get overwhelmed with the idea of simplifying. You'll be amazed how quickly you can work through the process even if you take just fifteen minutes a day to work on a specific area. I promise! It will be worth it.

