

Lori Wagner

Clutter Control



You should have seen her face when I told her! My best friend, a seasoned fifty-something saint of the most-high God, rolled her eyes and pretended to zip her lips when I shared the news I was asked to write an article on clutter. I guess if anyone knows my struggle with clutter, Carolyn does. She's been in my house on its good days and bad, and in every condition in between. She also knows how susceptible I am to cluttering not just my home, but my life with busyness and never ending to-do lists, all with every good intention, of course.

As I was praying about what to write, I thought about how our physical homes relate to our spiritual homes. Our houses, the places our physical bodies live, and our bodies that house the Spirit of the Lord are both subject to clutter.

Clutter affects me emotionally and spiritually. I can ignore it for awhile, but not for long. I simply think better and feel better when things are neat and tidy. Maybe there is a spiritual principle at work. The Bible says God is not a God of disorder, but of peace (I Corinthians 14:33). This verse speaks to me about the wonderful benefit keeping things in order brings—sweet peace.

Life comes with clutter. Just open your mailbox. If you don't keep up with it, the mail will take over—and not just paper mail, email and Internet communications, too. We have to be intentional about taking care of clutter before it becomes chaos in our physical homes and in our spiritual homes. So pull out your apron. We're on a mission.

“To successfully keep decluttered we should have a place for everything and consistently put things in their places.”

Keys to Decluttering

1. BREAK OUT THE RIGHT TOOLS.

Face it girls, if we aren't on top of things, dust bunnies will take up residence in our homes. If we don't want to house wayward lint and fuzz creatures, we have to purposefully take out the tools we need to exercise our homes of these unwanted intruders.

What is dust anyway? I don't want to gross you out, but dust is made up of little pieces of soil, flesh, and pollution—parts of our environment floating around. We deal with “dust” in our

hearts and minds as well, but God has given us a tool to clean away the elements of this world—we cleanse our minds and spirits through the washing of His Word. Just as we open the closet and take out that vacuum cleaner, we need to open the Word on a regular basis. If we don't, we may find unwelcome soil, flesh, and pollution taking up residence in our hearts and minds.

2. HAVE A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING.

To successfully keep decluttered we should have a place for everything and consistently put things in their places. Ah. Consistency. Discipline. Do we really want to go here? OK, Carolyn, we'll go here.

I have found having a place for my stuff is very important. Like my calendar. I keep my calendar current on Outlook and use a three-ring binder for a hard copy the family can access. It's easy to keep updated and also a place for all those papers and schedules that find their way on my desk. Sometimes everything is punched and filed neatly, but if it's not, at least I know where it is.

To help in the heart, mind, and spirit department, I've also made a prayer notebook. This three-ring binder includes sheet protectors where I slip in prayer requests, photos of friends



“Every idea that pops into our heads is not what we are called or authorized by God to do, even if it is a good and noble pursuit.”

and family, and flyers for upcoming speaking engagements, church events, and more. I keep this in a basket in my office with my Bible, journal, pens, prayer resources, and note cards for the times the Lord prompts me to write someone. Sometimes I jot a note in my journal to send an email later, but I've found keeping these things together makes it easier to remember, be consistent, and follow through with the things the Lord leads in prayer. It also helps my prayer time, because if I write things down as they come to mind, I'm not as tempted to interrupt my prayer or devotion and butterfly through the house to tend whatever thought just fluttered through my mind.

3. HANDLE IT ONCE—AND AT ONCE.

Procrastination is the number-one reason people clutter. It's best not to lay things down and think you'll take care of them another day. There's a "handle it once" filing philosophy that would be extremely helpful if we would be faithful to it: as soon as you

get something in, take care of it right then if possible and never have to deal with it again. This concept would help us improve our paperwork handling and our relationships. Selah.

4. GET RID OF EXCESS.

The powers that be gave me a sparse 1,200 words for this article, so it has to be decluttered of all but the key elements. One thing paramount to decluttering, I believe, is getting rid of excess. For example, water baptism—cleansing of the heart—strips away the buildup of that dusty stuff we discussed before: flesh, the world, and its pollution.

Excess is an individual issue. God made us each different as it pleased Him. What one person handles effectively without distraction might drive another person crazy (back to me and Carolyn again). But in considering excess, evaluate the balance in your life currently. Do things or activities of no spiritual benefit to you or others dominate your time? If so, I encourage you to delete them from your life and walk with God. The rewards of living close to Him are better than anything we're holding on to in this world.

5. ENJOY THE FREEDOM OF "AUTHORIZED LIVING."

Several years ago I heard Gerald Jeffers teach an awesome message on

"Authorized Living." Its principles can help us declutter without guilt. Let me explain. There are things we spend our time on and hold on to that aren't necessarily good or bad on their own, but the very fact they consume our time is reason enough to consider the roles they play in our lives. We are called to be good stewards of our time, redeeming the time the Lord has given us. Every idea that pops into our heads is not what we are called or authorized by God to do, even if it is a good and noble pursuit.

Keeping things in order means you are keeping them prioritized and in balance, which will help your spiritual walk with God. Invite the Lord to access every part of your life—every day of your life. When you invest some upfront time in decluttering, the result will be more time and more peace of mind. Instead of spending hours searching for that missing passport, you'll have time to search the Word—and that's a lot more edifying and so much less frustrating. So cut the clutter, cleave to the Lord, and reap the reward of peace God has for you today.

That's all for now. I have to go clean the basement. ❁



Lori Wagner is a gifted author and public speaker. She has written several books available through Pentecostal Publishing House, including her latest, *The Girl in the Dress*, recently released by UPCI Ladies Ministries. Lori is a member of Faith Apostolic Church of Troy, Michigan, pastored by Marvin Walker. You may visit her website at www.affirmingfaith.com.