

# Making Change

Title: Part 1 – Less is More

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Transition: Paul Prays & Seats

While everyone here in the house is saying “Hi,” I wanna warmly welcome you in and thank you for joining us on our app or social channels. We consider you a part of our family so let us know how we can pray for you or serve you.

So, today I am more excited and anxious than I can even describe. We are kicking off a brand new, 4-part collection of messages called “Making Change” and I am excited because I really, really believe that for so many of you, what God could do in your heart in the next four weeks could propel you in a direction that literally will change your life! And not just your life, but it could change your children's lives, and future generations of your family. I believe that with all my heart! That kind of potential is here.

BUT at the same time, I am incredible anxious because this could also be one of the easiest things to shake off and say, “You know what, I’m doing alright, I don’t need this, this isn't for me, maybe I’ll come back when it’s over...” So, I want to start by humbly challenging you to resist that temptation and make a commitment to be here all four weeks and to have your heart open to what God might want to do.

So, let me give you an overview and then we will just dive into this. Making Change is kind of a play on words. Over the next 4-weeks we are going to be talking about, everyone help me out: *{These will all be on one slide with icons}*

## **Less is More**

Then we're going to talk about, everyone say it:

## **Stress is Bad.**

Then week three we're going to talk about, say it:

## **Giving is Good.**

Then week four we're going to talk about:

## **Tomorrow Matters.**

What are we going to talk about? Let's say them all together: Less is More, Stress is Bad, Giving is Good, Tomorrow Matters. Again: Less is More, Stress is Bad, Giving is Good, Tomorrow Matters. That's really good, let's do them one more time: What are we going to talk about? Less is More, Stress is Bad, Giving is Good, Tomorrow Matters.

Less is More, Stress is Bad, Giving is Good, and Tomorrow Matters.

Today I want to dive into the theme that Less is More. Because here is reality, we have been programmed to believe that more is always better. You can ask my wife Cheryl, her and the kids make fun of me all the time because I think if a little bit of something is good, then a lot of it is always better! Anyone else in the house with me? If one is good then two is better! If one dollar is good then two dollars would be better. If one car is good then two would be better. If one donut is good then two would be better. Right? Some of y'all have been putting this into practice with kids, if one kid is good then two or three or eight would be

better! I've seen our kids ministry numbers; you'd swear half the parents drop their kids off and go to brunch.

A while back I got a giant pimple right in the middle of my cheek. I'll be 45 in a couple months, I'm like what gives, I haven't had to deal with pimples since I was like 16 and back then you just blasted it with some Oxy and went about your business. Where are my children of the 90's? Apparently though things have progressed in the past 30 years and now they have like legit skin melting poison you can buy and dab on your face, who knew? So, I go into Cheryl's stash of lotions and potions and ask her what I should use. She gives me a couple products and says, "Now just use a dab of this, that's all you need... a dab." Well, what did I hear in my head? If a dab will do you then half the tube will get the job done even faster! I gotta stand before people and preach on Sunday! So, I started rubbing this stuff all over my cheek twice a day. Two days later my skin literally started melting off. I had this giant open wound looking spot. It was awful.

Moral of the story, sometimes less is more!

AND in honor of that theme, I have just one verse today. That doesn't mean we will be getting out early, calm down, but I have just one verse today. My hope is if there's only one verse and you internalize that one verse, and you memorize that one verse, and you know that one verse for the rest of your life then we could make an argument that less is actually more! The verse is found in Ecclesiastes 4:6, let's all say this aloud:

**Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind.**

**Read that one more time with me...** Better is one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and stress and fear and panic and financial trouble. Let's say it again because we're going to internalize this one verse. *"Better is one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and a chasing after the wind."* **One more time...**

Less is More, Stress is Bad, Giving is Good, and Tomorrow Matters. Better is one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind.

SO, when is one handful better? Why is one handful better? Because if I have one hand and someone needs a hand up what can I do? I can give them a hand up. If I have one hand full and someone needs something, I can do what? I can offer something to someone who is in need. If I have one hand full and someone needs comfort, what can I do? I can offer them comfort. If I have one hand full and I want to take a nap, what can I do? I can take a nap! WHY? Say it with me. *"Better is one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind."*

Today, I want to drill down on this principle, when less is more. The way I wrote it in my notes is this: **Less of what doesn't matter is MORE because then I can experience more of what does.** Right? Less of what doesn't matter is MORE because then I can experience more of what does. So, the question we have to wrestle with today is this:

**What really matters?**

That's your homework today. I want you to spend 10 minutes defining what really matters in life. AND if you find this difficult trying to come up with a top 5 list then do this like you just found out you had less than 6-months to live! I know that's kind of morbid, but imagine you just learned you've got less than 6-months to live, what would really matter now? I imagine for most of us things like our families and friends would be near the top. Maybe there are a few experiences you still want to have, maybe that would be up there. I would hope your relationship with Jesus would become vital to you.

BUT here is what no one will have in their top 5: Their car, truck, or SUV. No one is going to have their iPhone 15 on there. No one is going to have their Balenciaga bag or shoes on there. No Rolex or Omegas either. No one is going to put their leather sectional, or the counter tops you finally installed. No one is going to say the number of Instagram followers they have. Right?

When you define what matters what you'll often recognize is so much of our lives are spent pursuing things that really don't even make the list. We tend to think whatever I don't have is what I need, because more is better, more is better. That's our consumer culture's mantra. But today we're learning the principle, what are we learning? Less is More! We're learning that Less is More. Better is one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind.

So, let's keep this really simple today. I want to give you three thoughts, if you're taking notes, under what I call "Less is More Living." Less is More Living. The first thing, what are we going to do? We're going to learn to:

## **Cut back.**

We're going to cut back.

I'll give you an example. When Cheryl and I first got married our very first home was a two-bedroom apartment in Palm Harbor. It was under 1,000 sq ft and it had two closets in the entire place. There was a closet in the master suite and a smaller one in the spare bedroom. Everything we owned had to fit in those two closets, which wasn't really a problem because at 23 & 20 we didn't own anything! Fast forward to today and we now live in a home that has 6 closets plus a walk-in closet! That's 7 closets! Some of you have a home that has like a closet within a closet, it's like a walk in with a bonus room and guess what we all do? We walk by all of our closets so full we can barely shut the doors and say what? I've got nothing to wear!

But it gets better. Some of you, you've got so much stuff in your closets that you had to start storing stuff in your garage. Some of you, I've seen it, you have so much in your garage—which was made for what again, a car—but you've got so much stuff in your garage that you can't park your car in the garage anymore! But still others of you have so much stuff stored in your closets that you had to store it in the garage, but you had so much in your garage that you had to start putting stuff up in the attic! And still others here today had so much stuff in the closets, garage, and attic that they had to go out and rent a what? A self-storage unit! You pay somebody else at another place to store your stuff that you don't use, and you don't see, and you probably forgot you even have!

That's why every now and then we have to remember, Less is More! Less is More! Less is More! Better is one handful with tranquility than a bunch of stuff to mess with!

We need to understand the principle that Jesus taught His disciples. Jesus was telling a story about a guy, and at the end of the parable Jesus said, "Your life does not consist in the abundance of your possessions." AND all of us know that up here in our heads, but we often don't live it out here in our lives. Your life does not consist in the abundance of stuff. The most meaningful things at the end of your life will never be things, and yet we tend to just accumulate, accumulate, and accumulate.

That's why I really want to encourage you to consider cutting back on your consumption, to make a conscious effort, we're cutting back, we're cutting back. You can't have the feast without the fast!

What I want in my life, honestly, is less stuff and more close friends, right. I want less stuff and more time with my family. I want less stuff and more memorable experiences. BUT in order to get this, what I have to do is cut back on consumption because I know less of what doesn't matter is MORE because then I can experience more of what does.

That's the first thought. We all need to take out the scissors and cut back. Cut back on our consumption. The second thought, if you're taking notes is we're going to:

## Clear out.

We're going to clear out.

I heard a very wise person once say, "You need to clear your life out as if your life depends on it..." WHY? Because it does! "Well, that's a little dramatic, don't you think?" And I hear you. But the more I wrestle with that—and maybe as I get older—I see the truth in this. To really be the husband that I want to be to Cheryl. To really be the dad I want to be deep down for Sophie and Ella. To be the pastor I want to be that honors God and doesn't end up in the ditch morally or mentally... then I need to declutter my life on a continual basis! I need to clear out my life as if my life depended on it. Because when I declutter my mind, my heart, my schedule, my possessions, my finances... it frees me to be everything that God has planned for me to be.

And I'm not talking about going full blown minimalist. I'm not talking about having only 4 cups, 4 plates, and 4 forks in your entire house. I'm not talking about a room with one chair in it. But I will give you an example of what I have been doing. For my work week, when I am here at church, I decided to get 5 black shirts and two pairs of jeans and that's my work week clothing. Every day, black shirt, and jeans. I don't have to wake up on a Wednesday and think, "Now, what am I going to wear today..." Nope, I just wake up and know it's already decided, black shirt and jeans.

Again, I am far from a minimalist, I am no Steve Jobs, but here's what I have found. As a family, as we declutter, cut back, cleared out, what happens is there is room in our souls that wasn't there before. When I'm not looking at piles of stuff everywhere I can connect with God in a more intimate way. When I come into a house that is organized there's not a drag on my heart and I'm able to enjoy time with Cheryl and the girls. There is something spiritual to clearing stuff out. Life does not consist in an abundance of possessions!

AND I know this is harder for some. That's because you didn't grow up with much. You grow up with that scarcity mentality and you tend to hold onto things. Waste not, want not! Why get rid of it because you might need it one day. Amen? So, I acknowledge that. I also acknowledge that some of you are more sentimental than others. You see something and go, "We got this back when such and such happened, long before we even had kids, so and so gave this to us, such good memories..." I acknowledge God wired us all differently. But at the same time your life does not consist in the abundance of stuff. Better is one handful with tranquility than two with toil and chasing after the wind.

See here's what happens when we don't cut back. We get paralyzed by options. One of the reasons, I believe, that we can walk into our closet and have so many clothes and say, "There's nothing to wear" is because we're overwhelmed with choices. It's kind of like if you're trying to find a movie or new show on Netflix or whatever streaming service you have. It's really hard to pick one, why? Because there's so many!

It's like the Cheesecake Factory menu. Anybody ever eat at Cheesecake Factory? I have a really hard time ordering there! If you've never been they have a 24-page menu! That's not an exaggeration, I've counted, they literally have a 24-page menu. I go to 5 Guys; I immediately know what I want. I go to Chipotle; I know what I want. But when I go to Cheesecake Factory, I'm so overwhelmed because there's so many options.

Here's my point. When you cut back and when you clear out it brings freedom for your soul! Suddenly it becomes easier to choose, and there's not a drag on your life. You're able to connect with God and others so much better.

So, a couple practical thoughts. I know we all have things we have a hard time letting go of, so here's something you can try. Thank it for the purpose it served in your life at one time. I know this sounds crazy,

but if there's something you're having a hard time giving away, thank it for serving a purpose in your life. I had to do this with the car my dad and I restored in high school. The car had been in my family since 1969! I had to say, "Thank you Buick for the memories you gave me 25 years ago. That time with my dad and my high school buddies was a blessing! You served your purpose well, but I'm not using you anymore so I'm setting you free to bless someone else..." Some of ya'll are looking at me like I'm crazy, but if there's something you're having a hard time giving away, thank it for serving a purpose in your life. Cut back and clear away.

Here's another thought. Walk through your closet and if you haven't worn it in the last year, bless somebody else with it! Every time you get something, give something away. Get one, give one. Get one, give one. Just got a shirt, give a shirt. Just got a pair of pants, give a pair of pants. Just got shoes, give shoes. Just got underwear, **DON'T** do it with underwear. Everywhere else, get one, give one.

What about this. Go through your house twice a year and try to give away or throw away 100 things, get your kids in on it! Just get rid of 100 items. You'd be shocked at how easy it is. In fact, I've got a puppy right now at my house I'll give away today! Make me an offer! BUT when you do any of this what happens? You recognize, better is one handful with tranquility than a bunch of stuff with toil and chasing after the wind.

Everybody say, "Cut back." Everybody say, "Clear out." Finally, number three, we're going to talk about this in detail next time in part 2, we're going to:

## **Pay off.**

We are going to pay off our debts.

Who remembers what we're talking about? Less is More and... **Stress is Bad**. How many of you would agree that financial stress is absolutely and completely draining? I have never, ever heard a person say, "Man, my debt helps me feel so much peace. I am so thankful for my high interest rate credit cards. I feel so close to God every time I see how much I'm paying in interest. Debt brings me so much joy." I've never heard anyone say that. What I have heard over, and over, and over again is, "Living with this debt over me is stressing us out. I worry about it all the time. We fight about money all the time! I'd give anything to be able to go back and not to end up in the place that I am right now."

That's why we're going to pay it off. Like I said, we're going to talk specifically about this next week and the heart behind doing this, but debt is not fun. What **IS** fun is being debt free! You say, "I could never get all the way there, I'll always have a car payment..." But I'm telling you, you start taking a few steps in the debt free direction, you get on a budget, and you pay off a credit card or two, you pay off a car... That feels good! That reduces stress! That helps you sleep at night! AND now you've got some momentum to pay off those student loans, and then like years later you're like some crazy person who doesn't even have a house payment anymore!

Come on, could you even imagine the freedom of going around every day without even a house payment? I'll tell you what, that would be fun! Stress is bad but paying off debt is incredibly freeing! Better is one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind.

Better is a car that's paid off than a brand new one with really big payments that stress you out! Better is a smaller house than fighting over the payments of a really, really big one! Better is financial margin and to be able to help others then living paycheck to paycheck wondering what would happen if you actually didn't get a paycheck! Amen?

What are we going to do? We're going to **CUT BACK**, we're going to **CLEAR OUT**, and we're going to **PAY OFF**, because less is more. Less is more! Less is more! Less is more! Better is one handful with tranquility!

AND here's what is so cool about adopting this kind of lifestyle. This is not about not having any possessions. And this is not about not having some really nice things. In fact, because you don't have a lot of junk you may actually have a few really, really nice things. I would argue all day long that it's better to have some nice stuff that you own than a bunch of junk that owns you! I'm going to say that again because this is going to set somebody free. It's better to have some nice stuff that you own than a bunch of junk that owns you. It's better to have something you love, something you use, something you enjoy than a bunch of stuff that clutters up your life.

I'll argue all day long that the richest people in the world are not those who have the most but those who need the least. Come on! The richest people in the world are not those who have the most but need the least.

Hop on a mission trip somewhere. Go to a developing nation. The first day you get there, you know what's going to happen? Your heart is going to break. You're going to be, "Oh, my gosh, they don't have running water. They've got dirt floors. There's no electricity." Two days in you kind of normalize to it and it's not shocking you as much. You start to look at the kids out playing with no shoes on and enjoying themselves outdoors, not inside all day playing on your iPad, but they're outdoors and they're laughing. Then you go to a worship service on day 4 or 5, and you see some Jesus followers who have nothing worshipping like they have everything. They have this deep sense of passion for Jesus, and this other worldly contentment. There's no comparisons, and longing, and lust for more. "We have what we need to get through the day. Give us today our daily bread." By the end of the trip, you are strangely jealous. You wish you had the simplicity, the passion, the joy... you wish your kids had this.

The richest people in the world are not those who have the most but need the least.

Less is More, Stress is Bad, Giving is Good, and Tomorrow Matters.

We have one chance to get this right church! You have one ridiculously short life. What are you? You are a vapor that appears for a little while. You're a mist that vanishes away. You blink your eyes, and your kids are going to be grown. You blink again and you're 65 wondering, "Where did my life go?" Please understand that **your life is too valuable, your calling too great, and your God too good to waste your life on meaningless things.**

Come on! When you understand that you serve a good God who has given you breath, and gifts, and a purpose. Your calling is special. You were not put on this Earth, during this time, to just accumulate stuff for yourself. Giving is Good. You were put here to make a difference in the lives of other people. When you recognize that your calling is too great, your God is too good, life is really, really short, then you refuse to waste your life on things that do not matter.

WHY? Because:

**Less is More, Stress is Bad, Giving is Good, and Tomorrow Matters.** Say it with me... {3x} Because:

**Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind.**

Better is one handful and an intimate relationship with my children than two handfuls and they grow up and don't even recognize or acknowledge me! Better is one handful and some really good friendships than the pursuit of things and no real spiritual community. Better is one handful and some experiences, family vacations, lazy nights spent around a fire in the backyard, than two handfuls and no time for each other. Better is one handful and a strong marriage than two handfuls (gotta be careful on this one) than two handfuls and constant stress and fighting!

Better is one handful and the ability to make a difference in someone's life than two handfuls and being consumed with yourself! Don't miss this. Better is one handful and the ability to glorify and praise your God and bring Him honor in everything that you do than two handfuls in toil.

That's why we're going to drive this down into our hearts. Say it with me:

**Less is More**

**Stress is Bad**

**Giving is Good**

**Tomorrow Matters**

One more time...

What do we know? Better is one handful with tranquility than two with toil and chasing after the wind.

Holy Spirit would do a healing work in our hearts and set us free from the relentless pursuit of more! May we pursue the things that matter most. Let's pray that together church, bow your heads.

[PRAYER TIME]