

Uncluttered Series – Part 2

Making Space – What is Clutter?

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Good morning! I want to take a moment to welcome you to Petra Church. I'm Pastor Brian Coles. I'm one of the pastors at Petra and we are so grateful that you joined us today.

We are in part two of our series called uncluttered. It's our hope that throughout this series you would be given wisdom to identify the things in your life that are simply not useful. Maybe they were never useful. Maybe they once were useful but now they are not. But at some point, these things became clutter. Useless items in your world that never have or no longer have any purpose but to get in your way and slow you down.

Clutter comes in all shapes and sizes. Clutter can be in your yard or extra things that simply don't have a real home, or you've never thrown away. Toys, piles of mulch or gravel, some large unfinished projects taking up space in the driveway.

Clutter can be inside your home. Maybe it's everywhere or you've centralized it to your garage or a specific drawer in your kitchen.

Clutter can be in your schedule. I've talked with many people who have realized that their schedule before Covid was full of so much clutter, not necessary evil, of just unimportant things.

Clutter can also be in your mind, thoughts about yourself or others that deter or distract you from God's will for your life. Lies you have believed that are simply untrue about who you are or who God is, or your place in this world. These thoughts are like seed bumps. Every time you get a little momentum in life, they cause you to slow down and, in some cases, stop all together.

So how do we unclutter?

Uncluttering your life is really about priorities. Because clutter is not always inherently bad, it's simply not necessary. Clutter is not determined by the thing, hobby, schedule or thought. Some things in life are always clutter no matter who you are. We must always work to remove them from our lives. Some things in life are determined by the season we are in; those things come and go. Other things are never clutter, they are your creator and your call, they hold an unchanging place in our lives. In fact, everything else is clutter compared to them.

Advanced degrees and training are necessary for some, for others it's just clutter.

A barn full of tools and equipment is necessary for some, for others, it's just clutter.

1. Some things are always clutter.

Tracy and I took the kids on a hike last weekend; we packed for a hike. We put everything we needed in a backpack. We didn't use a handbag or suitcase; that wouldn't have been practical. We took highly portable food along like fruit and sandwiches. We didn't take steak and a griddle although steaks would have been awesome. You just don't take that on a hike. No one strapped the sofa to my back and carried along the TV. These things are nice to have but not on a trip like this.

This is one of the ways the bible is so powerful in our lives because it helps us to identify the kinds of things in our lives that are always clutter. It does this by describing for us what our path of life is to look like. Because just like our hiking trip, life is the same way.

What you pack depends on the journey.

I remember seeing a picture as a child of the great migration of Americans into the unknown, open wild west. The picture showed a long caravan of horse-drawn wagons stretching for miles. The interesting part of the picture wasn't the long parade of wagons, but it was the piles of extremely expensive items littering the sides of the trail they were on. Pianos, large pieces of furniture, tools, even animals. The people had grossly underestimated how difficult the journey was going to be and things that at the beginning of the trip carried so much value, in the middle of the trip were left on the side of the road. Because what you pack depends on the journey you are on.

Scriptures teach us that life is like a vapor, and what really matters in spending eternity with God.

It teaches that life is not about outward appearances but inward character.

That godly wisdom and character are the most valuable things.

It is really true that some things are always clutter.

1 Peter 2:1

2 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

Ephesians 4:22-24

²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;

Ephesians 4:31

³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

Ephesians 5:3-4

³ But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. ⁴ Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place...

These things are always clutter. I would encourage you to look through these verses and prayerfully ask God to help you identify if any of these things are taking up space in your life. What if this was more than just a cute suggestion but it was really a life changing opportunity? Don't do the clutter stutter.

2. Some things are clutter in one season of life but not in another.

(Story about cleaning out the shed)

Before we go on, can we just take a moment to acknowledge our moms? Being a mom is not easy and especially during this time. Some of you have multiple small children. You're getting a crash course in homeschool and technology> We just want to take a moment to honor you and bless you. In fact, I'd like to put this out there. Mother's Day is coming up here soon. Can we start planning now to make celebrating the Moms in your life super important this year? Stepmoms, grandmas, foster moms, spiritual moms, expecting moms, if it ends with mom, ma or mother, we want to celebrate you and say thank you for everything you are sacrificing during this season.

Last week Pastor Brian Flewelling pulled out an obscure old testament story in 2 Kings 18:4. That's like preaching gold when you can pull out one of those stories about the people of God burning incense to an old bronze snake in the temple, a relic, super important in its time but now a distraction, absorbing time, resources and even worship and affection. So, Hezekiah destroyed it.

Are you holding on to old trophies, old victories, old moments with God? Old habits and ideas that were really important in their time but now they are clutter.

Perhaps you are being called to adulthood from being a teenager. Maybe you are moving from the single life to the married life. Or building a family with all the changes that brings.

Maybe you are raising older children and there is a new skill set required. Perhaps you have an empty nest and your readjusting. Maybe you're ready to retire.

Some things are clutter in one season of life but not in another. It doesn't have to be only the past, there are plenty of people who are so consumed with the next year, or the next season that they are completely missing the beauty and even the lesson of what is happening right now.

Ecclesiastes 3:1

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:

3. Your creator and your call are never clutter.

(story about packing car)

Your creator is never clutter; you don't make space for God. God, is a given, you make space for everything else.

Exodus 33:15-16

¹⁵ Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. ¹⁶ How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?"

¹⁷ And the Lord said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name."

Does the presence of God have the supreme place in your life? (Old testament centralized presence of God as opposed to now)

It's not that God is not present, He is everywhere, it is our awareness and partnership with his presence.

Your call is never clutter.

1 Samuel 17:32-40

³² David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him."

³³ Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth."

³⁴ But David said to Saul, “Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, ³⁵ I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. ³⁶ Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. ³⁷ The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.”

Saul said to David, “Go, and the Lord be with you.”

³⁸ Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. ³⁹ David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.

“I cannot go in these,” he said to Saul, “because I am not used to them.” So he took them off. ⁴⁰ Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd’s bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

What clutter is to you can be determined by your call. To Saul, his armor wasn’t clutter. It was really important. But to David, it didn’t fit him; it wasn’t designed for him. God had a different plan for David.

Some theologians think that Saul was hoping that David would wear his armor so the people would think that it was him out there and not David.

But God had a specific call on David’s life. He was not only called to defeat Goliath, but he was called to be king. More than that, he is a picture for all of us of Jesus the shepherd king defeating our enemy.

It can be so easy to lose sight of who God is creating you to be. So many other people are like, “I’ve forgotten to be like me. I locked myself into a mold that was handed to me by my parents or my peers and forgot to ask God.”

Is your home, entertainment, decorations, social media, speech, finances, and habits in alignment with the calling on your life?

The author who hasn’t written, the artist that won’t paint, the musician that won’t play, the learner that won’t apply for school, the holy person that won’t let go of old ways.

We have too many of these people. Your call is never clutter. I can’t tell you how much the calling that God has put on my life has influenced the choices I make each and every day. It is central to helping me decide what stays and what goes.

1. Some things are always clutter.
2. Some things are clutter in one season of life but not in another.
3. Your creator and your call are never clutter.

We covered a lot of things today. I hope that they are helpful in living the uncluttered life. Maybe we could close our time thinking on a question I asked a bit ago. Does the presence of God have the supreme place in your life?

Have you come to the place in your walk with him that you have determined that you don't want to go anywhere or do anything if He is not in it?

Something that I have been talking to my children about lately is receiving good gifts from God.

Matthew 7:10-12 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

In another similar portion of scripture, the good gift is the Holy Spirit, but in this one it's much more open ended. I found myself wondering, "what is a good gift?" I mean, I could probably list a few things off, but what if the gift God wants to give me is a hardship that I would never ask for, but it is imperative for my growth and knowledge of who He is. So now I've surrendered asking for the things that I think are good gifts and I've simply asked that God would give me what he thinks is a good gift.

God I just want what you want, I want to be where you are.

I've asked the worship team to sing a song for us. I'd like you to simply listen to the words of this song. Let the chorus become an anthem in your heart as we dedicate our lives to remaining in the presence of God.

Closing song

Prayer