

Isn't It Time to Declutter Our Hearts?

If you are like me, your home is full of piles of papers, stacks of books and a wide variety of every type of clutter possible to exist. Loved ones comfort me: "Your home is lived in." I smile, knowing the truth: My house is a mess right now and it's time to declutter.

Once the clutter is taken care of, I can take a deep breath and get back to work. Clutter makes me feel oppressed and a tidy house makes me feel productive and energetic.

I notice that my house is not the only thing that gets full of clutter. My email inbox can fill with clutter. My purse can accumulate all kinds of mess. My car can look like a locker room floor sometimes.

But the worst clutter of all, is the clutter that builds up in my heart. It can damage my relationships and keep me from living joyfully.

Clutter in our Hearts

What can build up in our hearts that is so damaging to our lives? Well, women can tend to be savers. We are so sentimental. We save cards, notes, letters, movie tickets, newspaper clippings and recipes. But, we can also hold on to hurts, anger, resentments, negative words and memories of negative episodes in our lives.

We remember something our husband did or said on our honeymoon (15 years ago!) or the Mother's Day that our son said, "I wish I had a different mommy." We take these things out from yesterday and examine them closely, remembering how they hurt and experiencing more pain from them today.

We remember failures too. Our own failures are etched in stone, along with our husband's failures, which we often build a shrine to, keeping them alive forever. We remember mistakes our children have made and can label our children based on these mess-ups.

"We are a sarcastic family," "None of us can control our tempers" or "This house is full of lazy pigs," are all things I have heard homeschooling moms say. Our words reveal the clutter in our hearts. I would rather hear moms say, "We are learning to be kind," "Our family is growing in anger management" and "We are learning to be tidy!" Now, that may sound silly to you, but how we view our family affects how we love them.

Clutter Checklist

Here is a list of things to help you discover the clutter in your heart. The things on this list will make you think of other things. Find out what clutter lies in your heart.

- Memories of hurtful conversations with your husband or children
- Painful episodes or trials from the past
- Negative labels for yourself or others
- Self-pity
- Failures, mistakes and sins
- Negative words you revisit again and again
- Threats ("I hope your daughter is just like you!")
- Thoughts that immobilize ("We don't have enough money.")
- Doubts about God and His goodness
- Daydreams about a different spouse, children, home, life
- Frustration toward others, especially spouse and children
- Worries and anxieties

Time to Declutter

How do we get rid of clutter in our heart? Separate out the

sin in your collection of clutter.

For sin-clutter, there is an easy process to get rid of it:

- Repent (Call sin what it is, ask God to forgive you and turn away from it).
- Renounce ("I renounce self-pity and refuse to indulge in it anymore.
- Make restitution/repair (If you have put a negative label on your child, repair the damage that label has caused and put a new label on him now)

If you have been daydreaming about having your friend's husband, repent and stop daydreaming. Then, begin to focus on the man God has given you, asking the Lord to help you see how your husband is a blessing in your life. Work hard to appreciate your husband and bring him good, not harm all the days of his life.

If you have labeled your daughter "Impossible One," please change her name to "Little Lamb Loved by God." With Jesus, all things are possible! God can change your daughter. If you are filled with anger toward your son, forgive him. Wipe his slate clean, just like God did for you.

For pain-clutter, ask God to heal your hurts from the pain involved. Then, be proactive. Choose to focus on *other* things from now on. Make a list of positive things to dwell on instead and give your mind a workout. Train your mind to be godly.

Finally, let go of expectations, especially expectations that set others up for failure. Your son shouldn't have to be a National Merit Scholar to please you. Your husband is a delight whether he fixes the disposal or not. Focus on the positive.

Replace Clutter With Joy

Once you get rid of all the negativity in your heart, there is a big empty space. Fill this space with the joy of the Lord. Focus on all that He has done for you! Focus on how amazing it is to belong to Jesus! Focus on the beautiful family that God has blessed you with, thanking God every day for the privilege of creating a home for them.

Let's live clutter-free!

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