

Sermon High Points

New Beginnings . . . The Twelve-Step Program for Clutterers

By Barrington H. Brennen

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Story: "A woman came out of her house and saw three old men with long white beards sitting in her front yard. She did not recognize them. She said, "I don't think I know you, but you must be hungry. Please come in and have something to eat." "Is your husband home?" They asked. "No," She said. "He's out." "Then we cannot come in," they replied. In the evening when her husband came home, she told him what has happened. "Go tell them I am home, and invite them in!" The woman went out and invited the men in. "We do not go into a House together," they replied. "Why is that?" She wanted to know. One of the old men explained: "His name is Wealth," he said pointing to one of his friends, and said pointing to another one, "He is Success, and I am Love." Then he added, "Now go in and discuss with your husband which one of us you want in your home." . . . The woman went out and asked the three old men, "Which one of you is Love? Please come in and be our guest." Love got up and started walking toward the house. The other two also got up and followed him. Surprised, the lady asked Wealth and Success: "I only invited Love, Why are you coming in?" The old men replied together: "If you had invited Wealth or Success, the other two of us would've stayed out, but since you invited Love, wherever He goes, we go with him. Wherever there is Love, there is also Wealth and Success!"

If your focus is wealth alone, the results are greed, "gi'me, gi'me" attitude, covetousness, focus on getting and stocking up. Your life will be cluttered

If your focus is success alone, the results are pride, arrogance, selfishness, "me-ism," see what I have done, being unteachable. Your life will be cluttered

If true love (agape love) is your focus, the outcomes are being selfless, giving, kindhearted, and being teachable. Your life will not be cluttered

If we focus on Success or Wealth alone, the chances of experiencing or developing a passion to share and love others will be very, very small. In fact, wealth and success without love emanate from self-centeredness, which is a root cause for crime and immoral behavior. However, if we focus on love, providing a caring, nonjudgmental family life and community, the chance of being successful and wealthy (not necessarily with money) increases tenfold.

Your focus determined whether or not you were a clutterer in 2007.

What is the meaning of clutter: It is "things lying about untidily"

Clutter is best described as "a confused or disordered state or collection; a jumble" Other words for clutter that will ring bells in your ears are:

chaos, confusedness, confusion, derangement, disarrangement, disarray, disorder, chaos, confusedness, confusion, derangement, disarrangement, disarray, disorder, disorderliness, disorganization, jumble, mess, mix-up, muddle, muss, scramble, topsy-turviness

"Cluttering is a manifestation of either depression or anxiety and elements of the condition can also be found in people suffering from Attention Deficit Disorder and/or Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). The condition of cluttering is the act of expressing outwardly what is going on inside the body. Clutterers hide behind clutter to keep from dealing with the people in their lives, and can sometimes use the clutter as a way of totally isolating themselves from family or friends. . . They basically replace

people with things. Hiding behind the clutter becomes a way of escaping from the inability to deal with the core issues of depression or anxiety in their lives. It also serves as a conversation topic to keep friends and family from becoming aware of the internal conflict the individual is facing."

When it come to our homes and our lives some of us have forgotten this most important text:

Ecclesiastes 3:6

"A time to search and a time to quit searching.

A time to keep and a time to throw away."

How do I know if I am a clutterer? *Twenty questions:*

Most clutterers will answer "yes" to three or more of the following questions from clutterers anonymous:

- * Do you have more possessions or items in your life than you can handle comfortably?
- * Do you find it difficult to dispose of many things, even those you haven't used in years?
- * Do you rent storage space to house items you never use?
- * Do you spend time looking for things that are hard to find because of all the clutter?
- * Do you find it easier to drop something than to put it away, or to wedge an object into an overcrowded drawer or closet rather than find space for it?
- * Do you collect things to give to others?
- * Do you bring things into your house without establishing a place for them?
- * Is your clutter causing problems in your relationships?
- * Are you embarrassed to have visitors because your home is never presentable?
- * Do you hesitate sharing about this problem because you are ashamed of your cluttering?
- * Are you constantly doing for others while your own home is out of order?
- * Do you miss deadlines or abandon projects because you can't find the paperwork or material to finish the work?
- * Do you sometimes get buried in details, making projects take much longer than is really necessary?
- * Do you procrastinate about cleaning up because you believe you must do it perfectly or you won't do it at all?
- * Are you easily side-tracked, moving from one project to another without finishing any of them?
- * Do you have problems with time management and estimating how long it takes to do things?
- * Do you believe there is all the time in the world to clean your house, finish those projects, and read all those piles of old magazines?
- * Do you use distractions to escape from your clutter?
- * Have you tried to clean up from time to time but find yourself unable to stick with it?
- * Does the problem appear to be growing?

Don't limit the meaning of clutter to something physical. Chuck Gallozzi in his article, "Clutter Everywhere," states:

"Clutter is usually thought of as things we acquire or accumulate. However, the things we don't do, but should do, clutter our mind with apprehension and stress. Unwritten letters, unpaid bills, unanswered phone calls, and unattended tasks and obligations take their toll on our lives. They create a slow energy drain and are as distracting as an endless humming in our head."

One author states: "As we grow and mature, we throw away our toys and the other things we have outgrown. We need to continue this process to weed out the junk in our lives. So, take an inventory and evaluate your possessions. Which ones are no longer necessary? Separate the unnecessary items into piles of garbage, donations, gifts, and garage sale items. And dispose of them accordingly."

Jodie Foster in the article "Clearing Your Inner Landscape - Freeing Yourself from Emotional Deadwood" states "Emotional clutter is a form of interference. When a river is blocked with trees, logs, bushes, etc., the water doesn't flow easily. The river begins to stagnate. Do you feel that your life is so difficult? Like it is stuck? If we are cluttered inside, we will most likely be cluttered outside."

What is spiritual clutter? It is the inability to nurture and support your purpose in life, WHICH prevents consistent and conscious behavior and decision-making. It limits your ability to fully develop values and actions that are in sync with your innermost desires.

My definition of spiritual clutter is the cultivation of habits and negative behavior that block out our vision of Jesus. It also includes the difficulty or inability to forgive and let go of the past.

What has cluttered your life? What behavior? What attitude? God is requesting that we examine our lives so we can have a cluttered-free life. Ephesians 4:30-31, 5:1-5 tells us of some things we are to free ourselves of. Read also James 1:20, 21.

The Twelves Steps of Clutterers Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over clutter -- that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for the knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The secret to avoiding clutter in your life is having a love-focused life. Love brings harmony, order, and contentment. To have love in your life is to have Jesus. Having Jesus brings the greatest joy and teaches us how to get rid of clutter. In 2008 our goal should be to renew our love with Jesus every morning. Lamentations 3:21-26. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.