

Outline

Clutter Clatter: Living Rich With Less It's All Too Much!

Not all reality shows do I like, but there is a fun one on *The Learning Channel* that I watch and enjoy. I think it gives us a glimpse into the challenge we in America find ourselves in financially right now. It's called [Clean Sweep](#) and on this show, a guy named Peter Walsh walks into an average home that is overcome with clutter and tries to help a family that is drowning beneath the sheer volume of STUFF in their home. The homes usually have piles of stuff that clutter the floors, the counters, dining room table, the beds. The closets spill over into the rooms and cannot be filled with any more games, books, clothes, knick knacks, crafting supplies, and other collectibles. By the time Peter Walsh and his team get to them, these families all seem to be drowning under the sheer volume of the Stuff that they own and are storing. Peter Walsh says they all beg for his help in getting control of their Stuff by crying out the four little words that are the title of his new book called *It's All Too Much!*

He and his team set about helping by removing all Stuff from the house and setting it in separate piles in the yard: a pile for trash, a pile for charity, and a pile to keep. Easy job one would think - except on first pass, you know the pile that is the biggest – by a long shot. You guessed it the pile of stuff to keep. Then things gets brutal and the show gets ugly as Walsh, like a marine drill sergeant, forces these people to come to the reality of what all this Stuff is doing to their lives. Peter Walsh's explanation for this fascination and challenge in so many people's lives? We are a people who love our **Stuff**. We love to buy it, collect it, borrow it, store it. And when we think we have just enough stuff, we go find more stuff, because we think that stuff will make us happy! As a matter of fact, Walsh says we have invented a phrase to describe this "happiness" that comes with buying stuff. It is called "[retail therapy](#)." We use shopping and buying things to help us get out of our bad moods, depressions, frustrations with life. We get therapy from buying things. And we buy and we buy and we buy.

Then we look around at our houses and see all the stuff that we have bought and our houses have become warehouses filled to overflowing with clothing we don't wear, technology we don't use, gizmos and gadgets that are gathering dust. We can't move in our bedrooms because our drawers and dressers won't contain the excess in clothes. Our dining room tables have not been eaten on in years as we need the space to store our important papers, our hobby supplies, our "things" that we will just die if we do not have them, yet have not even used in years – [Our Treasures – Our Stuff](#). We have offices overflowing with books that we have not read, self help manuals to help us deal with our clutter and disorganization. We get to the point that our houses are one big mess because we have no place to put all the stuff. Then we get to a point where we yell, "It's all too much!"

Walsh shares an interesting fact about America: [There are now more than 30,000 Self-Storage Facilities in the country offering over a Billion Square Feet for people to store their stuff.](#) In the 1960's the industry did not exist. [We now spend \\$12 Billion a year just to pay someone to store our extra stuff!](#) It's larger than the music industry. We are addicted to Stuff! We want more and we want it now. We will not wait for it. The clutter clatters about our house and the stuff is driving us to the poor house and insane along the way! It looks a little like this Veggie Tale character who found herself in a stew with her stuff. [Insert Veggie Tales video](#)

We are paying the price of our [Addiction to Stuff](#) because we cannot afford the stuff that we have and we, through credit opportunities, keep trying to accumulate more stuff! And we find ourselves in debt to the tune of the average American being \$9,000 in debt to the credit card companies. That has led us as a nation to be in debt and brought us into a [Recession - which is simply an inability to purchase anything because we do not have the money to do so.](#) We are there as a people, as companies, as a nation and as a world!

According to Walsh in his book, *It's All too Much*, there is a harsh awakening in this country [that happiness and success might not be measured by more material things.](#) That having more possessions may be more suffocating than liberating. That [a larger house, better car, and more "stuff" come with no guarantee of greater happiness.](#) That for many of us, the stuff we own ends up owning us. Suddenly you

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look around at the life you've built and all you've acquired and realize that it's all too much!

As a nation, and as you and me, we are at the center of an orgy of consumption and we are seeing that this need to own so much comes with a heavy price: kids so over-stimulated by the sheer volume of stuff in their home that they lose the ability to concentrate and focus. Financial strain caused by misplaced bills or over-purchasing. Constant fighting because neither partner is prepared to let go of their possessions. We are so often paralyzed by our stuff. Our lives are cluttered with the stuff that we thought would make us happy. We over-work to pay for our stuff, which then leaves us with less time to spend with the ones we love that we are trying to get all this stuff for in the long run. Let me introduce you to someone who first brought this to my attention and who is seeking to conquer this challenge in her life and that of her family. She is a friend of mine, Donna Hopkins. **Donna will take the stage and talk.**

Something has to change. A philosophy has to switch. God has hit the Reboot Button on our society and our economy and unless we change our ideas and our strategies for living, worse is going to happen to us. We just may implode as a society. But we can do it! We, like Donna, can change our thought patterns and our philosophy of things. The problem was the same in Jesus' day and He addressed it and so must we! He said our clutter in our lives is because we call the wrong things Treasure and we can't stop ourselves from storing it.

Clutter Clatter Shift #1 – Stuff Is Not Treasure

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. Matthew 6:19 NIV

If we as a nation and as individuals are going to recover from the financial strain that we have placed ourselves in with our modern philosophy of valuing stuff as treasure in our lives, it must begin with a re-thinking of our value system. We value stuff and the limited pleasure that the Stuff gives us rather than that which is truly valuable in our lives. Jesus' teaching here is the ultimate recognition of the futility of the "Retail Therapy" philosophy that existed in His day and still exists today. Buying things will never soothe our souls. As a matter of fact, not long after we buy that bigger house to contain all our stuff, it gets old hat and even too small to contain the other things that we buy to make ourselves feel better and we soon feel the need for a bigger, newer house. That new car smell eventually goes away. The new clothes fade or we grow out of them. But we are addicted to buying and collecting more and more and more "treasures" that we hope will make us feel secure, accepted, and comforted. Stuff can never do that for us, especially Stuff we cannot afford to get and we simply put on our credit card. Our nation is in the crisis it is in right now because **We have bought into a philosophy that we have a right to have it all and to have it now.** And with that philosophy we buy our way into a debt that we cannot get out of and our homes and possessions are in danger of being taken away from us. Not only that, but we "store" our stuff in our homes and in storage facilities because we cannot part ways with it. Our homes are not safe havens of comfort and joy, but rather warehouses to stack and store our things and possessions. We have closets of clothes we have not worn in years (some with the tags still on them). We have rooms piled high with magazines and unused kitchen utensils, books, games, crafting supplies and disorder because we Treasure our stuff and will not part with it, even though it is making our homes unlivable and our relationships untenable because our dreams for living are hampered by the clutter.

Clutter Clatter Shift #2 – Stuff Cannot Produce Happiness

But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19 NIV

We must as a people shift our philosophy that buying stuff is buying treasure. Our Retail Therapy is not working. Like a drug, it makes us feel good for the moment. Today's purchases become tomorrow's clutter in our homes and in our spirits. Stuff does not last. **The excitement and fun of stuff erodes away quickly.** Now, don't get me wrong. Possessions in and of themselves are not bad. Having a nice home and a nice car is not a sin – unless it keeps us from being able to invest in the things of life that truly last and never rust. If I seek to purchase and store stuff and care for it to fulfill a void that can really

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only be filled by a relationship with God and others, then possessions interfere with a fulfilled, happy life. Do you treasure your stuff over your relationships, your things over your dreams, your possessions over your vision for the life you really want or that God wants for you? Then your possessions truly own you and your treasures are weighing down your heart. There really are only two "Treasures" that will last eternally – **Investing your time and resources in a Relationship with God and investing your time and resources in the Relationships God brings into your life.** Those are the only Treasures that will bring you happiness – **NOTHING ELSE MATTERS!!!!!!!!!!!! Or works!!!!!!!!!!!!**

As a matter of fact, Jesus says that all other pursuits will only give you a blind eye and a dark soul:

Your eyes are windows into your body. If you open your eyes wide in wonder and belief, your body fills up with light. If you live squinty-eyed in greed and distrust, your body is a dank cellar. If you pull the blinds on your windows, what a dark life you will have! You can't worship two gods at once. Loving one god, you'll end up hating the other. Adoration of one feeds contempt for the other. You can't worship God and Money both.
Matthew. 6:22-24 TM

Clutter Clatter Shift #3 – Stuff Cannot Produce Security

We gather Stuff because we are insecure. We are most generous with ourselves – treating ourselves to more Stuff, hoping against hope that we cover every need of provision in our life. And then we hoard our stuff, hoping that we will provide for our future that is so unknown. No one else will look out for us, so we better take care of ourselves. So our houses become warehouses of useless stuff that we didn't need in the first place or we would be using it (but it hasn't been used in years). We hoard our money, refusing to live generously, just in case we hit a Recession. We hope that our Stuff will keep us secure – but it doesn't. That is because we are violating a biblical principle in our lives, so the more we hoard, the less secure we feel. The more generous we are with our lives and resources, the more secure we feel. Jesus said it outright in the exact same passage we have been using all day:

What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with *getting*, so you can respond to God's *giving*... Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes. Matthew 6:30-33 TM

Clutter Clatter Challenge Part 1 Over the next 30 days that this series lasts let's not spend one dime on ourselves for anything but the necessities to live – only buy that which we must have for ourselves in order to live – that 's right – no new clothes, no new cars, no new houses, no new anything.

Clutter Clatter Challenge Part 2 Over the same 30 days, let's do a "Stuff Purge" of our homes. Let's find everything in our houses that we have not used in a "one-year time period" and prepare to get rid of it. Begin to store that stuff in marked bags; bags marked "trash", which will include everything that you would not give to your family and friends as a nice gift; bags marked "Charity," to include items that you would be able to give to someone else without feeling embarrassed and are willing to give to a local charity.

Good Will Party – On the last day of this series, we will have a great big party where we will all bring our donations to church and organize them, and give them to a charity who can use them to raise money to support themselves.

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