

Outline

Clutter Clatter – Kid Clutter

Can you believe it? Our 30-Day Clutter Clatter Challenge is almost over. You have made it to the last week. How many of you have made it through the whole month without spending money on buying Stuff this month, except for that which you needed as a necessity? Toilet Paper is definitely the Stuff of necessity and we have had to buy that this month. The Super Bowl is coming up and I definitely had to go out and buy that 42" Plasma LCD display TV – Just kidding – I did not go out and get it. I am waiting for next week – still just kidding!

Some of you are wondering what I am talking about, so let me just give you a quick refresher of what we as a church have committed to doing this month. We have been studying a little bit about how the Bible addresses our present economic climate in our great country with a series that I have entitled **Clutter Clatter: Living Rich With Less**. It was actually inspired by the TV show *Clean Sweep* and the creator of the show on *TLC*, Peter Walsh, who also has a very inspirational book out right now called *It's All Too Much* in which he makes the point that we are a nation addicted to Stuff and that we spend way too much money bringing Stuff into the home. Not only that, but once we get that Stuff into our home, we become emotionally attached to it and we keep it endlessly, then get more Stuff until our homes become warehouses of useless Stuff that we never use but can never get rid of. So with that in mind, I have asked all of us to do a month-long evaluation of our spending habits and our hoarding habits with a *Clutter Clatter Challenge* that looked like this: It is not too late to get involved!

Clutter Clatter Challenge Part 1 – For 30 days (until February 8) buy no Stuff (new or used), except that which is a necessity to live!

Clutter Clatter Challenge Part 2 – Over that 30 days, do a Stuff Purge in your home, choosing either to throw out or give to charity that which you have not used in one year!

Good Will to Goodwill Party – On Sunday, February 8 we will bring all that Good Stuff to Give Away to church and pile it in the Commons Area to give with good will to Goodwill and we will celebrate the good will by sharing the good will of a meal together!

So next week I am counting on all of us sharing the good will with each other in donations of Stuff and Food – the Stuff goes to Goodwill who will be here to pick it up, and the Food we share with each other in celebration of our great successful Stuff Purge! In the meantime, we have been evaluating our homes and analyzing biblically how we can very practically “De-Clutter” some of the most important rooms of our houses. We started with the all-important Bedroom, moved to the Kitchen, and today we work on one of the worst offenders of clutter in our homes – The Kids’ Room. As a matter of fact, we might even say “Kids’ Rooms,” for if your house is like our house, that Stuff has a tendency to wander all over the house. So today we deal with **Kid Clutter!**

Using the example of the poor habits of money and Stuff in our nation and our present economic climate we find ourselves in, the theme throughout this whole series has been that we as individuals have developed a philosophy of entitlement that says “I deserve what I want and I deserve it now.” We have justified our clutter “Stuff Filled” “warehomes” and our overspending ourselves into debt with the idea that we deserve to have what we want and if someone is willing to give me credit, then I am willing to use it – to the tune that many of us are crediting our sense of entitlement and desires right into bankruptcy and repossession of all that Stuff we want and will not save for, but purchase by going into debt. We have to fundamentally change our thinking and practices!

And guess who is watching and learning and falling right into this philosophy? You guessed it! Our kids are learning it well and are partnering with us full bore in the “Stuff Mentality,” all the while getting a great education in confusing: “I Need” with “I Want.” Instead of learning the great lessons that come with **Delayed Gratification – putting off something I want till later when I can actually pay for it** – we are masterfully teaching them how to “Delay the Pain” through the lie of Retail Therapy, shopping to assuage pain or give pleasure. And they are learning the lesson well.

February 1, 2009

Peter Walsh in his book *It's All Too Much*, says this about our training of the present generation in our bad habits of Stuff and Spending:

Kids learn so much more from what they see than from what they hear. It's frustrating for me to listen to parents complaining that their kids won't clear the clutter in their rooms, or take care of their things. Inevitably, I've just heard those same parents bellyaching about the clutter that fills their homes. Don't complain that your child won't tidy his room when your closet is spewing clothes into your bedroom. Model the behavior you want from your children and then I'll throw a little sympathy your way.

How do you change a nation of "Stuff-aholics" and binge shoppers? You retrain a generation about the value of things and the discipline of what are "necessities" and what are "niceties." No one is saying that toys are unessential. Toys are fun to have and fun to play for kids. Even adults should be able to indulge themselves with a nice house, a nice car, vacations, and toys as they have the money to afford them. This all begins in the lives of children and guess who is the **#1 influence in the lives of children?** And will be the #1 influence of their behavior as adults? It isn't friends, who do influence them toward many things, or the media, which does tempt them in philosophy just as it does you. It is **Parents!** Look at what the Bible says about this influence:

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6 NIV

This can be good or bad and takes on both a passive and an active role. Notice positively the counsel given to us as parents – "Train" – that is not a passive word. It is a very active, intentional word. It implies in its definition the same intent as what you expect from your child's teacher at school. You would not accept a lazy teaching philosophy from your child's algebra teacher that says, "Oh, I don't instruct the students. I just let them figure it out. As a matter of fact, I don't even really use that algebra stuff myself. You'll never use that in the real world." We would lobby hard to get that teacher removed. No, a responsible algebra teacher is going to "train" your child in the commutative and associative properties, using them in real life examples as well as theoretical principles. That is the idea of what God encourages us as parents. We are to train our children in the biblical and effective principles for successful living in the world. And as we do that, when they are old (and that is a relative term for all children), they will not depart from it. That training, just like in the algebra class involves both direct instruction of effective principles and the modeling of those principles effectively being used to achieve success in our lives. That can be good or bad. For we are always training whether we know it or not.

Good – As we teach and model Good, and I would say, biblical principles, the Bible tells us that we will generally see them lived out in our kids' lives as they grow older.

Bad – As we teach and model Poor, and I would say, unbiblical principles, the Bible tells us that we will generally see them lived out in our kids' lives as they grow older.

Apply that to your present lifestyle and worldview toward Stuff, Clutter, Spending, Money, Credit, and Debt. If we want to turn this nation around economically and morally, we must begin with ourselves and then move on to creating a generation that does not revere Stuff, value money over relationships, rely on Credit to live, or see Bankruptcy as an ultimate end to get out of having to pay for Stuff.

And there are some simple Clutter Clatter Principles that we can apply to help Train our Children to be content with Living Richer Lives with Less.

Clutter Clatter Kid De-Clutter Principle #1 – Be the Parent, not the Pal!

"More than ever, it is imperative for parents to be parents, to demonstrate by their words and actions what they value, and to model the behavior they desire for their kids."

Peter Walsh says it well in *It's All Too Much*

The Bible encourages the same thing when it tells us as parents to:

February 1, 2009

Discipline your son, for in that there is hope. Do not be a willing party to his death. Proverbs 19:18 NIV

We must realize that we have a responsibility to parent not pal. Our child's lives depend on it. Do you realize it is not your goal in parenting to make your kids happy? It is your goal in parenting to train your kids to mature into responsible adults that can think logically and with values. That means that you will not be able to always give them what they want, do everything they want, or let them behave in ways that they want. Nor should you. As a matter of fact, it is a great principle to find one time a week where you say to your children "No" for no other reason than simply to allow them the discipline of knowing that "they cannot own everything in the world."

I know, I know. That is un-American. But it is just that inability on the part of parents that raised the present generation of adults who do not delay their gratification and are allergic to pain to the tune of the average American being \$9,000 in debt and a nation that has more per capita people addicted to substances than any other time in history. We must train our children and that means that we will inflict pain on our children in the form of **Limits** and **Routines**. Create a life model by setting and enforcing reasonable limits and establishing clear routines.

Clutter Clatter Kid De-Clutter Principle #2 – Set Toy Limits

From infancy (and the first three years set the tone for the rest of life) provide your child with a couple of bins for toys – two or three – whatever is reasonable for the space you have. This is where the toys live. Not in the whole house, not in Mom and Dad's Bedroom, not the Kitchen/Dining Room - in the Toy Bin in the Kid's Room or playroom. And when the Toy Bin is full – no more toys! Before a new toy can be added, an old toy must be thrown out or given away to charity or to someone who will value and use it. This may seem harsh at first, but kids do not need an endless supply of toys to make them happy. And no, more is not better! Avoid the philosophy that says, "If one toy is good, then 50 must be great, or if a child enjoys one game, then naturally they will enjoy 20 games that will bring 20 times the enjoyment." That just brings "un-played clutter" and trains your child in a sense of entitlement.

Once again, the *Clean Sweep* and biblical principle here is very simple: "Managing Inflow is merely a matter of creating an equal volume of outflow. Don't hold onto Stuff just because it is cute or expensive or sentimental" (Peter Walsh – *It's All Too Much*). This type of clutter management will also help your children learn early on the value of giving vs. getting. Pass on the joy rather than keeping the junk. This is a good life-lesson in learning to live out the biblical principle of generosity and giving. Here are some good lessons you can train in your child with Toy Limits:

- You can't own everything.
- There is joy and satisfaction in giving to others who are less fortunate.
- Mom and Dad (and Grandparents) are not a bottomless pit of supply.
- You must make decisions surrounding the things you own.
- You must decide what is important to you, value it, and look after it.

It's All too Much – Peter Walsh

Clutter Clatter Kid De-Clutter Principle #3 – Establish Toy Routines

Children who do not learn to pick up after themselves will grow into adults who do not pick up after themselves. Be the parent in commanding cleanliness of yourself and your children. As you Train your children to clean up their toys and clothes and put them away at the end of the play session or the end of the day, you will train them in several effective and helpful life lessons:

- The importance of Personal Responsibility.
- The fundamentals of being organized.
- The concepts of timetables and scheduling.
- To participate as a member of a larger family (and not just an individual).

It's All too Much – Peter Walsh

February 1, 2009

Let them know there is no free ride

Clutter Clatter Kid De-Clutter principle #4 - Be the Change You Want to See in Your Kid

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:9 NIV

You have to be able to live out this verse with your children. But like it or not, they are going to live out this verse. To me, it is just a matter of if I want to try and make that a positive experience and impact on my children or if I want them to just passively carry on my bad habits, my poorly cluttered example. We must choose to be the example for our children and actively train them with good principles and a great example. They are going to become “like you.” Remember when you said, “When I grow up, I will not be like you,” to your Mom and Dad and then just last year as an adult you said something that sounded just like your Mom or your Dad. That’s right; we cannot help becoming like the parents who trained us in habits that are just like them because they got us in our most formative years. That is both good and bad.

You can’t help but be like your parents – it’s in the training and the DNA. But we can choose to reframe and re-shape that training, replacing foundational poorly formed principles with positive, true principles that counteract that “training” we received.

Start today choosing to retrain your cluttered, retail therapy, debt creating, sense of entitlement mind. Do the *Clutter Clatter Challenge* with yourself this week. And sit down and help your child go through that same *Clutter Clatter Challenge*. Be the Parent, but also the Partner. Explain to them your wounded thinking and how you are passing it on to them, then partner with them to think of ways for you and them to change for the better. De-Clutter the house and your habits today, so that you can truly encourage them to follow your example and live by your biblical and effective principles. De-Clutter Today. As the next song says – you only have *One Life to Live*.

February 1, 2009