

Cleaning Out the Clutter! (Cathy Wilkes)

A few months ago, we had trouble pulling out the meat drawer of our fridge. It didn't seem to fit properly in the grooves. It felt heavy and awkward. I knew there were a lot of things in there and I needed to take some time to clean it. After wrestling with the drawer a few more days, I decided enough was enough!

I pulled out the drawer and took it to the counter. There were the 'regulars', the things I expected to find: packaged meat, cheese, cheese slices. I set them aside; the drawer was still pretty full. When I dug deeper, I found a total of eighteen, yes, eighteen condiment packets of ketchup and other dressings and sauces collected from restaurants and stores. We could not even remember who would have put them there! I put them in a bag, and I was shocked. What a weight! It was so heavy I didn't wonder anymore why the drawer was awkward and seemed like it no longer worked properly.

Isn't that so like life? Something gives us warning signs that it is not working so well – a muscle, a joint, our patience suddenly leaves us, we get upset over something simple, or someone “bugs” us. Maybe it even escalates; we don't feel like praying, or, talking to someone; we skip church until it becomes a habit to miss.

Sometimes we ignore these prompts; life is too busy. But at some point, if we take the time to stop and take a closer look, we find “stuff”! “Stuff” has collected until it is a damaging heavy weight that endangers our functionality; we are not nearly as effective or influential in an area of our lives.

All it took was ten minutes to clean out the junk, rinse the drawer, put back the cheese and far fewer condiments and go on with my day. What useful space, potential, freedom and peace of mind are waiting when we are willing to stop, to pause and do some heart and mind housecleaning!

In Proverbs 25:4 and 5 we read: “Take away the impurities from silver, and it will go to the silversmith *for* jewelry. Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne will be established in righteousness.” We were created with talents, gifts and potential that flourish when nurtured and given freedom to shine.

In John 15, Jesus talks about being pruned. It sounds scary but it is as we are pruned, that we lose the dead and unfruitful parts of our lives, so that we have room for the rich gifts of His Spirit that enable us to grow life-giving fruit that can fuel those people whose lives we touch. Just think of the fruit we can produce when we clear away the clutter.

Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Philipians 4:8