



Reduce

[Psalm 37](#)

Sixth in a 9-part series titled: *Reset*

Pastor Matt Friend | July 22 & 25, 2021

- OUTLINE -

Today's Big Idea:

Giving up the good is the only way to make room for the great.

Eight Principles and Questions for Reducing, Decluttering & Simplifying Your Life:

#1 – The Worry Principle (vv. 1-2)

Ask yourself, “Does this thing bring more anxiety into my life? If so, I may need to let it go.”

#2 – The Willing Principle (vv. 3, 5)

Ask yourself, “Am I really willing to do whatever God leads me to do in this situation?”

#3 – The Word Principle (v. 4a)

Ask yourself, “What does God’s Word teach me about holding onto or giving up this thing?”

#4 – The Want Principle (v. 4b)

Ask yourself, “Do I even want this thing in my life or is it an obligation someone else has placed on me?”

#5 – The Waiting Principle (vv. 5-15)

Ask yourself, “Am I willing to wait until God shows me what to do?”



#6 – The Wealth Principle (vv. 16-17)

Ask yourself, “Does this thing require more time, money, space, or energy than God has given me? If so, I may need to let it go.”

#7 – The Worth Principle (vv. 18-22)

Ask yourself, “How will my decision about this thing impact eternity?”

#8 – The Weakness Principle (vv. 23-40)

Ask yourself, “Can I admit that I’m weak and in desperate need for God to do what only God can do in this situation?”



Resource Recommendation:

Reset: Living a Grace-Paced Life in a Burnout Culture
by David Murray



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– NOTES –

Today's Big Idea:

Giving up the good is the only way to make room for the great.

Other ways to say the same thing...

- Giving up good things is the only way to make room for great things.
- In life, the key to making room for the great things is to give up the good things.
- We can only carve out room for the great things by getting rid of the good things.
- Sometimes we must give up the good to make room for the great.
- “Don’t be afraid to give up the good to go for the great.” –John D. Rockefeller

Why this Message is Important:

Have you ever felt like your life was like a cluttered garage? That you have so many things going on you’re not even sure what to do



next? Does your calendar look like a football play gone bad or like a strategy of war plan turned upside down?

I hear all the time that our people are feeling pulled in a thousand different directions. I hear it from students and stay-at-home mothers and fathers. I hear it from the underemployed, the unemployed, and the over-employed. I hear it from those who make seven figures and those who covet that life. I hear it from spiritual leaders and coffee baristas.

Perhaps we all feel a bit like Dr. Seuss who writes,

*How did it get so late so soon?
It's night before it's afternoon.
December is here before it's June.
My goodness how the time has flown.
How did it get so late so soon?*

Brigid Schulte confessed, “This is how it feels to live my life: scattered, fragmented, and exhausting. I am always doing more than one thing at a time and feel I never do any one particularly well.”

For some of us as children, our biggest concern was getting home in time to watch our favorite TV show. Now that we are all grown up, our lives are crammed with stuff. We have family obligations, a mortgage, diapers to buy, health insurance premiums, car insurance premiums, life insurance premiums, in-laws, a few friends, many enemies, a boss, work colleagues, work conflicts, work meetings, work deadlines, disappointments, and unfulfilled expectations.



Obviously, many of these commitments are good, necessary, and even-God given. But what about all the extra stuff that we've allowed to creep into our lives? What will the results be if we don't declutter, reduce, or simplify our schedules, task lists, obligations, debts, and our commitments? How is all of this affecting our mental health, our cardiovascular health, spouse, children, grandchildren, close friends, bottom line, anxiety, depression?

Giving up the good is the only way to make room for the great.

This is true for individuals, corporations, and organizations. Jim Collins said it best that “the undisciplined pursuit of more” is the key reason for most corporate failure.

In our interconnected world, there are far more activities and opportunities than we have time and resources to invest in. Many of these are good, even very good, but not all are vital. Instead of making a millimeter of progress in a million directions, by investing in fewer things, we can make significant progress in the most important things. That means taking the much-neglected knife of “no” to some things. Peter Drucker said often that “People are more effective because they say ‘no, this isn't for me.’”

Even if we wanted to declutter, reduce, and simplify, where do we begin? Thankfully, the Bible speaks to this.



Eight Principles and Questions for Reducing, Decluttering & Simplifying Your Life:

#1 – The Worry Principle (vv. 1-2)

Ask yourself, “Does this thing bring more anxiety into my life? If so, I may need to let it go.”

Do not fret because of those who are evil or be envious of those who do wrong. –Psalm 37:1 (NIV)

According to the heading, Psalm 37 was written by King David, most likely at the end of his life. The aged king looks back over his life, at the good and the bad, and reflects on how he didn’t need to fret so much and so often. Bible scholar Walter Brueggemann sees this as the wise old king’s inspired advice on how to live “a well-ordered, reliable” life in a very unpredictable world.

The opening words of verse 1, “Do not fret,” in Hebrew literally mean, “Do not get heated.” Today, we would say it this way, “Don’t allow yourself to get all worked up.” This same invitation is also found in verses 7 and 8.

#2 – The Willing Principle (vv. 3, 5)

Ask yourself, “Am I really willing to do whatever God leads me to do in this situation?”

Trust in the Lord and do good. –Psalm 37:3a (NIV)

Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this. – Psalm 37:5 (NIV)



Trust is a synonym for faith. It's the starting point for all right relationships with God.

The word "commit" is a graphic word in Hebrew. It means to roll one's burdens onto God, just like one might roll a burden off his back onto the back of his horse, camel, or donkey.

In order to know God's will, you must first be committed to doing it. Why would God communicate His will to someone not interested in doing it?

#3 – The Word Principle (v. 4a)

Ask yourself, "What does God's Word teach me about holding onto or giving up this thing?"

Take delight in the Lord. –Psalm 37:4a (NIV)

The stem and mood of this verb command us to put ourselves in a relationship with someone else, to make ourselves happy in the Lord, to put ourselves in a delightful relationship with the LORD. It's a relationship word. Interestingly, the same word has a connection to living under the authority of God's Word...

I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart. – Psalm 40:8 (NIV)

#4 – The Want Principle (v. 4b)

Ask yourself, "Do I even want this thing in my life or is it an obligation someone else has placed on me?"



Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. –Psalm 37:4 (NIV)

“Those who delight in God desire or ask for nothing but what will please God.” –Charles Spurgeon

“Confirm, Almighty God, the deep desires of my heart and fix my purposes in your will so that I may not be distracted by what others flaunt as either pleasure or prosperity, as I pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.” –Eugene Peterson

#5 – The Waiting Principle (vv. 5-15)

Ask yourself, “Am I willing to wait until God shows me what to do?”

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil. For those who are evil will be destroyed, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land. A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found. But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity. –Psalm 37:7-11 (NIV)

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that this kind of attitude—this meekness, this willing to wait on God—is a core virtue for Jesus-followers. However, Jesus doesn’t take a lot of time to describe what meekness is. Thankfully, Psalm 37 does.

Who are the meek of verse 11? They are the humble of verse 7, those who don’t second-guess God’s timing; the dependent



of verse 9, those who leave vindication and vengeance to God. In context, the meek are those who are willing to wait on God.

#6 – The Wealth Principle (vv. 16-17)

Ask yourself, “Does this thing require more time, money, space, or energy than God has given me? If so, I may need to let it go.”

Better the little that the righteous have than the wealth of many wicked; for the power of the wicked will be broken, but the Lord upholds the righteous. –Psalm 37:16-17 (NIV)

The search for the simple life continues today, particularly in the educated class: simple clothing, minimalist design, local dining, and thinking about these things while thumbing through the latest edition of *Real Simple* magazine. But the effect is limited. We set out to eat, pray, love, but we often end up with binge, purge, regret.

All of this interest in simplicity is fine, and a lot of it is wise, but notice the logic. It’s working from the theory that if we can simplify things outside ourselves—our style of dress, the furniture in our houses, our travel, our food, our relationships, our children’s schedules—then we will find ourselves becoming simpler. In short, this simplification is aimed at our circumstances, the world around us. Not that there’s anything wrong with this approach. It can be gratifying, but the Bible talks about a quite different kind of simplification.

The Scriptures call us to a simplicity that springs up within the heart of the one who loves the God who is one. There’s nothing wrong with eating a diet of only raw food and wearing



only underwear sewn from locally grown cotton. But the biblical notion of simple living doesn't arise from the character of our lifestyle. Rather, it arises from the character of the God who gives us life.

#7 – The Worth Principle (vv. 18-22)

Ask yourself, "How will my decision about this thing impact eternity?"

The blameless spend their days under the Lord's care, and their inheritance will endure forever. In times of disaster they will not wither; in days of famine they will enjoy plenty. But the wicked will perish: Though the Lord's enemies are like the flowers of the field, they will be consumed, they will go up in smoke. The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously; those the Lord blesses will inherit the land, but those he curses will be destroyed. –Psalm 37:18-22 (NIV)

Other ways to ask this same question...

- Does this thing help me love God more or less?
- Does this thing help me love others more or less?
- Does this thing encourage or distract from my mission to help other people follow Jesus?
- Does this decision give me more or less space to be generous with others?

#8 – The Weakness Principle (vv. 23-40)

Ask yourself, "Can I admit that I'm weak and in desperate need for God to do what only God can do in this situation?"

The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds



him with his hand. I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread. –Psalm 37:23-25 (NIV)

The Lord loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones. – Psalm 37:28 (NIV)

The salvation of the righteous comes from the Lord; he is their stronghold in time of trouble. The Lord helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him. –Psalm 37:39-40 (NIV)

Thankfully, the person and work of Jesus took all our burdens so we can walk in the freedom of the gospel!

Why Reduce, Declutter, and Simplify? Because...

Giving up the good is the only way to make room for the great.