



Start 2025  
with a  
Spring Clean  
of your life.



## Day 1 Attack the clutter!



If you are anything like me, I love to start the year with a good clean out. Some may call the clean out a 'Spring clean', some may call it 'decluttering the junk', whatever you call it - as I look around my home it is surprising how much clutter I collect - especially on the shelf that sits on the kitchen bench.

I have a confession to make - I have an 'everything I need' basket on my kitchen bench - you know the place that you put things, so that they are in easy reach. Some people have an 'everything draw', the place where important things like rubber bands, paperclips, screwdrivers, scissors are stored.

When my son yells out at me, 'Mum, where are the elastic bands', I can easily call back, 'they are where they always are, in the everything basket on the kitchen bench'. After a while, however, my everything basket gets so full of 'everything' that it starts to spill out over the kitchen bench - and the very important thing in the basket, becomes impossible to find!

Our heart is exactly the same. When left unattended, our heart can quickly begin to look like a junky everything draw.

A spring clean of our heart is what is needed! I invite you to join me over the next few weeks in the important task of opening the door of our heart and sorting through all the junk that may have inadvertently collected.

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am a bit concerned as I ponder the thought of delving into my heart, not knowing what I might find there! Give me courage to confront the areas that need to be confronted, discard the junk that needs to be discarded, and cherish the treasures that you have given me. Amen.*



## Day 2: Three Important Boxes

When I was young, my mother made sure I developed the life-time skills to handle the clutter of accumulation. In fact, it was typical for my mother to enter my bedroom the very first day of the year with three empty boxes and a big black marker. The boxes were never the same size but rather graduated sizes - small, medium, and large. Mum would announce that my job for the day would be to sort through everything in my room - I used to call it 'dejunking'. At that point she would take her marker and label the large box "Throw Away". The medium sized box always got the label "Give Away", and the smallest one, "Keep." After the labelling was complete, I started my job.

The plan was simple and very effective, yet it was always plagued by two serious problems. There were two very serious and difficult questions that hovered over the entire dejunking:

- What if I throw this item away and then discover that I needed it?
- What if I keep this item and it is only junk?

If you give into the second question, you know you'll continue tripping over the clutter until you dejunk again! Although, they were difficult questions, my mother would not allow them to keep me from doing the job!

It does not take long to question, 'I wonder if I can use this same simple system to dejunk my life? Can I empty the contents of my heart, my mind, and my memory and sort through the clutter? Are there things to throw away? Do I have things inside of me that I can give away? What should I keep?'

If our physical lives always benefit from a regular dejunking, so too must the draws, shelves and cupboards of my heart, mind and memory benefit from it!

Are you ready to join me on this personal dejunking process? In your journal or notebook, write three headings on the next three pages.

As we progress through this devotional, we'll use these pages to list the thoughts, attitudes and feelings we need to throw out, identify the things we need to give away ... and really cherish the things we need to keep and store in our heart.

*Prayer: Lord Jesus, I acknowledge that there is much in my heart that needs to be sorted through. I have been carrying around thoughts and memories that may need to be thrown away. Help me to have the courage to deal with each.*

## Day 3: The Throw Away Box!



Let's pick up our imaginary "Throw Away" box. Is there anything inside of me – in my heart, mind, or memory – that I could put in the Throw Away box? Did I have garbage I have been tripping over or lugging around that could be eliminated? Upon examination, too often the answer was 'yes'.

Do you remember the parable of the Sower which Jesus taught in one of his messages?

The seed represents the word of God, while the ground upon which the seed fell, represents different kinds of hearts.

The first was the hard, compacted soil of the pathway. This heart is so hard, so downtrodden and solid that nothing can grow. Then there's the stony heart, where there was little soil so the seed struggles to take root and grow. The stones are symbols of big mental strongholds that prevent God's word from growing deep into our heart. We will deal with some of these strongholds in this cleaning out process. The next type of heart was the thorny heart, in which thorns or weeds grew which choked the seed, preventing it from growing. Jesus identified that the thorns was greed for riches, pleasures and lusts, worldly distractions which choke our devotion to God's word. The type of soil that Jesus looked for was healthy soil, free from stones, thorns and hard compacted soil. Soil which was rich in nutrients and moist with the water of the Spirit.

If we apply this parable to our view of the Throw Away box, we can see that many attitudes and thought processes belong in this box. If these poisonous or toxic attitudes remain in our heart, they will choke God's word so that it cannot grow. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal in what condition your heart is? What type of soil resides in your heart? Is it hard, rocky, filled with thorns or thistles – or is it like a lush vegetable garden that produces abundant fruit?

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, I have not often considered what the condition of my heart is like. Open my eyes to see how you consider my heart. Show me the areas that I need to address. Where are the stones that need to be thrown away and the thorns that need to be uprooted? I'm ready. Amen.*



## Day 4: Discard False Guilt!

One of the first things we can easily identify as having to be discarded is “Guilt.” It is no wonder to me that people talk about being on a guilt trip. The word picture is perfect if you imagine the baggage that you have packed for other trips. Unpacking from a guilt trip may not be easy, but those bags may be carrying things that should be in the thrown away box.

Many things have been known to cause guilt, from credit cards to an unused treadmill or stationary cycle. Children are capable of producing guilt. So are jobs, husbands, mirrors, telephones, chocolate isles, police cars, and even the word ‘no’. As diverse as these items are, they and many others can all produce guilt (varying in intensity from mild to crippling).

Let’s take a look at one small word. When you were a child, chances are great that the word ‘no’ was one of your favourite and most powerful weapons. We even know children who will say ‘no’ when they really want to say ‘yes’ - just to show they can!

Then something mysterious happens as we age. We find it more and more difficult to say ‘no’, especially when asked if we can do something good.

We somehow forget how to say ‘no’ even though it is used to be our favourite word. It is interesting to link this riddle to the type of question that is being asked. Saying ‘no’ to something bad is usually quite easy. On the other hand, saying ‘no’ to doing something good is often much more difficult.


A good rule to remember, however, is ‘When you say ‘yes’ to something, you say ‘no’ to something else.’ So, it is possible to say ‘yes’ to a good thing’ and ‘no’ to something better or best.

Is there something that you have said ‘yes’ to, that has meant you were saying ‘no’ to something more important?

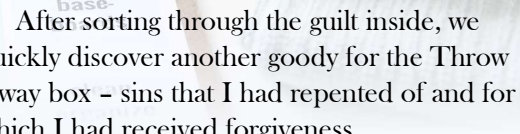
What is causing guilt in your heart? In light of God’s truth, is this bad guilt that needs repentance, or false guilt that needs to be discarded from your heart?

Isn’t it wonderful that all true guilt can be dealt with by coming to our gracious Father. And false guilt can be swiftly thrown into the Throw Away box.

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, I often take on too much, and regret that I didn’t have the courage to say ‘no’. Give me the courage to prioritize my time so I can faithfully serve you, giving attention to what matters most. Amen.*



## Day 5: Discard Forgiven Sins



After sorting through the guilt inside, we quickly discover another goody for the Throw Away box - sins that I had repented of and for which I had received forgiveness.

Wait a minute, I thought, if I had genuinely repented - that is, turned around from sinful behaviour - and asked for and received forgiveness from God, where were these things doing inside of me? Talk about clutter!

Maybe you are like me. I realise that I had done something wrong - 'for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23) - and I admit my wrongdoing. Then I ask God to forgive me, for I know that "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

God is more than happy to forgive us when we have truly repented, but many times I don't forgive myself. So days, maybe weeks, later I find the remembrance of those same old sins haunting me and I ask once again for forgiveness. The Bible says that God forgives and that He also forgets our sins: "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more" (Isaiah 43:25).

Sometimes it is difficult to accept forgiveness because we know that we are not so generous with our forgiveness of others. We try to put God into a human-sized box so that we can understand him better. But putting God into a box is always risky business because He will never stay in a box we construct for Him. He will not be limited by our limited knowledge of Him.

God is capable of forgiving the sinner who repents and he is also able to forget our sins. So all sins that have been forgiven need to be put into the Throw Away box, and not be carried around in our lives.

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, empower my heart to understand how vast is your forgiveness of my sins. Even though I find it hard to forget my past sins, strengthen my heart to walk in the knowledge of your forgiveness, so I do not carry my forgiven sins into the future. Amen.*



## Day 6: Discard Arrogance

It is a good feeling that the Throw Away box is filling up. Aren't you glad now it is the biggest box? However, there is more than needs to be discarded.

Hurts, both real ones and imagined ones are some of the things that need to be thrown out next. Hurts take many different shapes and forms. Hurts can be fresh and new, or they can be almost as old as we are. Hurts can be based on facts, or they can be based on feelings. With so much diversity, what do these hurts have in common? They all cause pain to the person carrying them in his or her heart, mind or memory.

Can you recall a recent situation when someone hurt you? Perhaps they said something, or forgot to do something, and you felt it was hurtful and mean of that person for acting in such a way.


The problem with hurts, is that there is no way knowing the motivations of the person who, you believe, hurt you. But by holding onto that hurt, you are tucking it into your heart and storing it there. Before long hurts are like sores, if they are not adequately dealt with they will begin to fester and become infected, becoming a larger wound.

We often need to ask ourselves, is this hurt worth the space in our hearts, minds and memories? While some hurts do need to be adequately and sensitively handled, many hurts can be swiftly released and given to God. Assuming the best about the other person, is another way we can explain to ourselves how their behaviour may have been unintentional.

Another way of looking at the hurts done to us is to ask ourselves whether or not we are keeping a 'score card' on other people. God's word says that love 'keeps no record of wrongs' (1 Corinthians 13:5). It keeps no record of the sins of which we or others have repented. Love puts past hurts into the Throw Away box. It doesn't matter whether the hurts are intentional or unintentional, real or imagined, they all belong in that large box! (see Colossians 3:13)

Do you have hurts that have occurred many years ago, which need to be discarded? Add them onto your Throw Away list.

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, I remember when [insert name here] hurt me. I've been holding onto that hurt, storing it in my heart. I now decide to release that person, forgiving them, and throwing that hurt out of my heart. Amen.*



## Day 7: Discard Selfishness

This throwing away business can be hard work! But we know that we are making important progress. As we continue the spring cleaning, sometimes we discover some nasty stuff inside. It can be like finding a mouldy surprise at the back of the fridge or unused handbag. On one hand it is so disgusting that it makes us want to stop, but on the other hand it reminds us of how necessary the de-junking process really is.

One of the next disgusting things that we need to throw away include arrogance and selfishness. It is hard to pinpoint when these things were added to the clutter, but it is certain there is no place for them.

Arrogance, sometimes called pride, can be such a paradoxical thing. Usually, it rears its ugly head when there has been no particular performance to take pride in. It is almost as though, by assuming the posture of pride, we try to convince the world that we have done something we can take pride in.

God's Word tells us, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit" (Philippians 2:3). An arrogant and prideful person does most things out of these two motivations.

Arrogance and pride can be the underlying motivation behind many good works. We may do things, so that others think well of us, or so we can hear words of praise and adoration.

It is the Spirit of God alone who will reveal when we are acting with ulterior motives which steam from arrogance or pride.

Romans 12:3 tells us "Do not think of yourselves more highly than your ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you."

Look into the clutter of your heart. Is there any arrogance? Are you pursuing something for selfish ambition or vain conceit? Then put it in the Throw Away box. Many times we are most selfish is in our closest relationships. Take a good look at your heart. Do you find any selfish behaviour infiltrating your deepest friendships? Are you selfish in your relationship with your husband or wife? Are you demanding with good friends and family? Do not let familiarity breed selfishness.





## Day 8: Discard Anger

The Throw Away box is very full, but there is one more thing that needs to be added. We have thrown away false guilt, forgiven sins, hurts and disappointments, and arrogance and selfishness, but the process of dejunking my heart, mind and memory needed to include throwing away anger.

Anger? Me? Is it really possible to find anger mixed with all the other clutter we have been sorting?

When we think of 'anger' we may quickly imagine a person who shouts at people, or throws objects or slams doors when they exit the room. Yes, these behaviours do indicate an anger problem. But, it is also possible to have residual anger that has been allowed to remain, but be expressed in a socially acceptable manner. It may not be seen by throwing flying plates, but could be seen by flying sarcasm. Sometimes it is not easy to determine which assaults do more damage - the physical ones or the more subtle verbal attacks.

In Australia we often find sarcasm to be a safe way to express our anger. While we know that angry outburst are unacceptable, we quickly revert to sly sarcastic comments because they are less obvious to everyone else.

As a Christian today, I would tell you that I feel strongly that sarcasm is very destructive and has no place in our interactions. It is a form of anger that we should put into the Throw Away box.

Maybe you never thought of yourself as an angry person. Or, you may have learned to express anger in a socially acceptable manner. If sarcasm isn't your weapon of choice, perhaps it is sullenness. A pouter seldom gets tagged with the angry label, but that kind of behaviour might be an indicator that there is anger in the clutter.

Have you ever heard the expression 'someone is pulling your chain'? That statement is true of anger. Anger invisibly chains the angry person to the one with whom they are angry. The only way to break this chain is by releasing that person and forgiving them.

God's Word says, "In your anger do not sin" (Ps 4:4; Eph 4:26). While everyone has feelings of anger, acting on those feelings by violent action, sarcasm, pouting or any other behaviour done with the desire to hurt another person is sin. So put all expressions of anger in the Throw Away box.



## Day 9: The Throw Away Rule

Well, we didn't know if we could fit one more thing into our Throw Away box. It looked as though we have used every square inch. Are you feeling like you're relieved that messy job is over? If so, we must remember there is an important rule that revolves around the Throw Away box.

The rule is: Once you throw it away, no digging in the trash! Don't second-guess yourself and take things back out of the box. The guilt you were feeling was bad guilt, not precipitated by any irresponsible or intentional wrongdoing. Leave that guilt in the Throw Away box. That is where it belongs.

You have repented of those sins. Don't drag them back out of the box. They will just clutter up your heart again.

And the hurts you pitched in? You have extended grace and forgiveness by giving up your "right" to hurt back. Those hurts need to stay in the Throw Away box.

I'm sure you have no desire to pluck back any of the arrogance or selfishness that has been put into the Throw Away box. And the anger you tossed into the box needs to stay there too. No digging in the trash!

Look back at your Throw Away list. Are you tempted to fish around in the mess for any of them? If you already managed to retrieve a couple of the thrown away items, remember - put them back in!

*Prayer: Loving Heavenly Father, you have given me the courage to sort through the clutter in my heart, discarding my false guilt, forgiven sins, pride and arrogance and anger in its multitude of expressions. Give me the strength and wisdom to live with this cleaned heart and help me to resist the urge to look back into the thrown away box. May I not retrieve anything in it. Amen.*



## Day 10: Release Stinking Thinking

Everyone knows that when any house is shut up for along while, a musty smell begins to pervade the entire space. The musty smell quickly turns into the smell of mould, mildew and dampness. What is needed? Windows need to be open to let out the old smell.

In the same way, the windows of our heart need to be opened to allow the wind of the spirit to blow through, releasing the stinking thinking that builds up in our mind.

Stinking thinking is caused by attitudes that have no business residing in our heart. Attitudes such as bitterness, false humility and self-righteousness cause stinking thinking. Even a victim mentality can cause a bad smell to accompany anything that proceeds from your heart.

When we allow bitterness and resentment to remain in our heart, it acts like mould and mildew which grows over everything, covering every memory and past event with a covering of ugly, black gunk. This prevents a proper reflection of how God may have blessed us during this event, to be recognised.

What becomes of jewellery that is hidden away in a drawer and never worn? It becomes tarnished and dull. In the same way, false humility prevents us from properly shining God's goodness and grace to other people. When we allow a sullen and sorrowful attitude to remain in our heart, the joy we know is ours through our belonging to God's family cannot shine so others can see it.

The victim mentality is one smell that seems to pervade any room or memory that has not been allowed to be blown away by the wind of the Spirit.

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, reveal to me if I have stinking thinking in my heart that needs to be aired out. Show me if resentment or bitterness, false humility or a victim mentality have developed. Holy Spirit blow through my heart and release this musty smell.*

## Day 11: Give Away Experiences



I turned next to the medium-sized box, the Give Away box. Do you have anything inside of you – in your heart, your mind or your memory – that you could give away? Do you have anything someone else would want?

As we poke through the clutter, we discover we all have experiences that we could put in the Give Away box. We have all gained a certain degree of wisdom from our experiences and all of these are available for this box. We realise also that giving away experience

was a very delicate issue: even though the experience might be helpful and wise, it had to be requested to be appreciated.

Many times we gain wisdom and experience from what can be referred to as 'life lessons'. Those are times when we learn from our mistakes. Experience, even experience gained from bad choices is good for the Give Away box.

However we must remember that items placed in the Give Away box should not be forced upon someone else. It is better to let people ask you for the items in the Give Away box or at least suggest an interest in them. Do not force-feed people with your experiences.

Here is a good rule of thumb: if you are interrupted while telling a story, and after the interruption no one asks you to complete it, it is an indication that no one really wanted to hear the story in the first place. Let's keep this in mind, because giving away experiences that no one wants is not constructive.

What's a biblical example of this? The woman at the well, after hearing Jesus reveal many personal details of her life, went and told everyone her experience – and the result was that many were introduced to the Son of God!

What experiences have you had (positive or negative) from which you have gained wisdom? Think of a wonderful experience that taught you a lesson. Jot down that experience. Think of a painful experience that taught you a lesson. Jot that down as well. Look for opportunities to give away your experience, but only as they are requested.



## Day 12: Give Away Memories

Keep looking inside your heart. Was there anything else that you have accumulated that you could give away? What about the pictures on the wall of your heart? Are there not some wonderful memories that you can put into your Give Away box?

Memories are wonderful things we can give away. Memories are extremely comforting. So much so, we often take great steps to 'create' memories which we will hold in our heart for many years.

But how often do children (or even adults) ask you to retell some of those memories, just to refresh and re-feel the wonderful experience those memories inspire.

Much of what we do at Christmas, how each family chooses to celebrate the birth of Christ, become memories we choose to hold onto and enjoy over and over again.

However, not every memory we create or hold onto is pleasant. These memories, which are painful and may remind us of mistakes or painful experiences may need to be packaged and given to Jesus. He is the only one who can bring good things from painful past experiences.

However, other memories are powerful reminders of what God has done in our lives. We read in Psalm 105, "Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgements he pronounced" (v5).

Memories of what God has done in our life are worth giving away. In order to not forget what God has done, it can be helpful to journal your experiences with God. Retelling incidents can help preserve the memory. That's why God's Word says, 'confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved' (Romans 10:9). While we often think of this verse as relating only to salvation, the confession helps to confirm the reality of the event to us and keeps the memory alive in our heart.

What is your favourite childhood memory? What other warm memories do you have that could bring comfort to another? Jot down a memory of when God's word spoke directly to you. Writing down the memory on this page will help you preserve it.



## Day 13: Give away Encouragement

While it can be tempting to stop when a job is half done, God encourages us to keep going and finish the job of dejunking our heart by continuing to look for other things to give away to others. In fact, encouragement was one of them.

Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians encourages us to be encouragers:

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing" (5:11). Note also what this verse does not say. We do not read, "Therefore discourage one another and tear each other down just as in fact you are going." I have occasionally seen, however, discouragement being put into the Give Away box, even by members of God's family. The world does enough to discourage people; we don't need to help.

"Don't let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen" (Ephesians 4:29). When was the last time you or any adult in your family was applauded at home? Too often home is permeated with a negative atmosphere instead of a positive one.

Life can be pretty discouraging. It is also discouraging to realize that life is not fair. We want things to be equitable. The truth is, though, that if things cannot be completely fair, we hope the scales of justice will tip in our direction. But it is no surprise to God that life can be discouraging. There are situations we encounter that tear us down, but it is important that we remember God's word and not contribute to the discouragement. We are to encourage one another and build each other up. Psychologist and author Abraham Maslow once said, "It does nine affirming comments to make up for each critical comment".

Encouragement is a powerful tool and it can be such a simple thing. But beware of The Gutter Theory. That is that people who live in the gutter often do everything they can to pull others down with them. After all, who wants to be in gutter alone? But a word of encouragement can be the first step out of the gutter. So, ask yourself: do you remember a time when someone's encouragement spurred you on? Do you remember the last time you gave encouragement away? Make a plan to put encouragement in your Throw Away box.

A decorative header image featuring a wooden-handled brush with yellow bristles. Below the brush, there are several small, colorful labels with text: 'ear', 'clean', 'wash', and 'wash base'. The title 'Day 14: Give Away our faith' is written in a black, cursive font across the top of the image.

## Day 14: Give Away our faith

I continued to rummage in my clutter and discouraged that I had faith inside of me that would be the perfect addition to the Give Away box. How did I know it would make such a great contribution? Because I had experienced the privilege and blessing of being the recipient as someone shared their faith and put it in their Give Away box.

There are plenty of opportunities for each one of us to give away our faith. Sometimes the opportunities are structured, planned, calculated and extensively prayed about. Sometimes they present themselves spontaneously.

When my two older boys were little we often went to the library. It was a fun outing and all three of us looked forward to it. One day, as we laughed and read and picked out our pile of books, the librarian came over to join us.

“You always seem so filled with joy,” she said. “What is your secret?”

Wow! What an opening! What a perfect opportunity to share about Christ. So what did I say? “Gee, I don’t know,” I replied. “I guess I just got enough sleep last night.”

Now that was really spiritual. A reply like that is bound to make a difference for the kingdom of God. I realised I almost immediately that I had missed an opportunity. Later in the week I was reading the Bible in 1 Peter 3:15: “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”

It couldn’t have been much clearer. I was not prepared to give an account of my hope. After reading that verse I asked God to give me another chance with the librarian. Sure enough, on one of the next few visits the librarian presented me with a wonderful opening to share my faith. This time I was prepared. Faith is a good thing to put in the Give Away box.

Sharing our faith, putting it into the Give Away box as we spring clean our hearts, can result in different responses from those who receive it.

Do you remember a time when you gladly embraced the faith shared by another?

Do you know someone who warmly welcomed the faith you shared with them?



## Day 15: Give Away Prayer

The Give Away box was about as full as it could get. Still, as I continued the spring cleaning of my heart, I found at least one more thing for it. I could give away prayer.

God's word talks a lot about prayer – things about it that I understand and many things about it that baffle me. The whole idea that the creator of the universe is ready, willing and able to talk with me is mind-boggling. More than that, He actually desires that communication.

Both my sons are at university – one in Sydney and one in Canberra. While I don't miss their dirty laundry, I do miss our conversations we shared. So, when they call for a chat, I make sure I am available and not distracted.

As fun as it is to talk with my sons, it is even better to talk with God. With God I also want to be available and not distracted when I hear His voice. But, in contrast with my sons, my calls never bug Him. He is glad to hear from me when I am lonely or happy or sad or afraid.

But what makes prayer especially suitable for the Give Away box is that we can ask other people to give away prayers for us. That is what we do when our loved ones need prayer and we say 'we'll pray for you'. In the Old Testament Moses was told to hold up his arms and as long as he did the Lord's army prevailed (Exodus 17:8-16). But, like us, after a while, his arms grew tired. So he asked Aaron and Hur to help him hold his arms up.

That is what we do when we join together with other believers and pray for someone or a situation.

Do you give away prayer for your family and church community? Have you ever thought of picking up the church directory and praying for each name listed in it? When did God answer a prayer you gave away for someone else?

Knowing that someone is praying for you is very exciting and comforting. Take time today to tell someone that you prayed for him or her.

There are many wonderful books on prayer including, of course, the Bible. Begin or continue your search for knowledge on prayer.





## Day 16: Give away our Blessings

The Give Away box was getting very full. But there is one more thing that many Christians often forget can be put in their Give Away box - that is God's blessing.

When Jesus sent out the 72 disciples he told them:

“Whenever you enter someone’s home, first say, ‘May God’s peace be on this house.’ <sup>6</sup>If those who live there are peaceful, the blessing will stand; if they are not, the blessing will return to you.” (Luke 10:5-6)

This verse is telling us that as we move around in our lives, every encounter is an opportunity to speak God’s blessing over people’s lives.

Have you ever given or spoken a blessing over someone else?

Every Sunday we hear the words of the blessing repeated, “May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious unto you and keep you in peace.”

Those are the words of the blessing - they are words which speak of God’s goodness being passed onto another person.

How often do you speak blessing over other people?

Our words have power. Words are like containers, holding either good things or bad things. When we speak encouraging words, we bless others with God’s goodness and promises. However, when we speak critical things which tear people down, it is like we are cursing them.

Our words are designed to build people up and give them a vision for their future in God - is that how people feel after speaking with you?

Of course, there are other ways we can give God’s blessing away. We can bless people by cooking a meal, cleaning their house, mowing their lawn, or just making the time to call them on their phone - all these activities can be a blessing that someone would otherwise not have received.

There are also financial blessings, when we give money to others because they are in need - whether it be financial, a good deed or a spoken blessing, we are called to bless others.

So ... make sure you put your blessings in the Give Away box!



## Day 17: The Give Away Rule

Before we put this box aside, there is a rule you need to know. We must only put things in the Give Away box that are useful to others.

We don't give away junk; we give away jewels.

We don't give away garbage; we give away good things.

We don't give away trash; we give away treasures.

How many of you have a closet filled to overflowing with once-upon-a-time treasures? Those polyester pantsuit used to be a fashion statement. But that was years and years ago. Unless someone wants to use it for a fancy dress party, it is unlikely someone will want it.

Remember the experiences and memories? We need to put them in the right box. We've all had experiences that have no positive worth to another person. Perhaps every now and then we have the urge to share an experience for our own self gain. Maybe giving that experience will illustrate how smart, talented, or extraordinary we are (or think we are). Maybe our desire in giving away the experience is to elevate ourselves.

If you tend to be a person who gives away much more information than was actually requested - you need to be reminded that not everyone needs to hear the epic novel. Most epic novels contain information that is of no particular worth to the listener.

So, we need to learn to control the giving away of experiences. If the experience is of no use to the listener, it is best to avoid putting it in the Give Away box. Remember to give away experience and wisdom as they are requested.

Sometimes the experience we give away puts us in a good light and someone else in a poor light. This is always destructive and definitely breaks the Give Away Rule. Do not give away experiences that hurt another person.

When we speak of giving away encouragement, we need to ensure we are being genuine. It also needs to be given with no sense of an ulterior motive. If encouragement is given for the sole purpose of advancing a cause, the encouragement will not be sincere or effective. This is pertinent when sharing our faith. While our faith is good to give away, the emphasis must remain on Jesus - not on *our* faith or *our* power. Remember the Give Away Rule!



## Day 18: Things we Keep

My Keep Box was the smallest of the three boxes. Amazingly, I had found several things for the Give Away box. I had filled the Throw Away box to overflowing, and now it was time to determine what I should keep. As I sorted the remaining items, I realised that there was a very important thing I had inside of me that I wanted to keep.

I wanted to keep God's Word. This certainly did not cause clutter in my heart, mind and memory. In fact, in many ways, it helped to eliminate clutter and could actually keep my heart free of junk.

Here is an example. In Psalm 119:11 we are told that hiding God's word in our hearts (putting it into the Keep box) will help keep us from sin. Sin is a definite cause of clutter. Putting God's Word in the Keep box can help prevent that sinful clutter.

The Word of God is described as sword. "Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17) God's word is our offensive weapon in the battle with the enemy. Jesus Himself used the Word to battle Satan. (Matthew 4:1-4)

Jesus knew the Word of God and pulled His sword to quote from Deuteronomy 8:3. The devil decided that two could use the power of the Word, but in his arrogance he tried to battle with the One who was the Word (see John 1:1). Yes! Keeping God's Word and God's promises in our Keep box is the way to go.



## Day 19: The Keep Paradox

I realised as I gently put God's Word into the Keep box that many of things I had put into the Give Away box I could actually keep too. It was a paradox.

We can learn from experience that it is wiser to respond than to react to a situation. By my definition, a response is a thinking reply and a reaction is similar to a knee jerk (no thinking there).

Memories fit the paradox too. They can be put into the Give Away box and also remain in the Keep box.

So too goes to prayer. We can put prayer into the Give Away box and still have plenty for the Keep box.

Here are some reflection questions:

Have you learned something from your experiences that you can give away and keep?

Perhaps you have had a similar experience with the choices of reacting or responding. Did you have a good experience or a bad experience that provided you with wisdom? You can put it into the Give Away box and into the Keep box too.

Name a memory you have that you want to give way to your children. The good news is that you can keep it too.

Think of a time when encouraging someone encouraged you. Jot it down.

Has your faith been bolstered as you gave it away to another who gladly embraced it? We can give away our faith and keep it.



## Day 20: One More Rule

The task of dejunking my heart, mind and memory was almost complete. The spring cleaning was going well and things were looking pretty clean inside of me. Boy, that was a step in the right direction.

Just as I was about to declare the task of cleaning up the clutter of my heart finished, I remembered one more rule. This rule was not unique. In fact, the chances are great that you've already heard it before.

What is the rule?

When you get it clean, keep it clean. The logic is so obvious, yet the task itself is quite challenging. This was a great idea, but I found it very difficult.

Have you ever sorted through the clutter in the drawer by your refrigerator only to find that in six months or even in six weeks the drawer was a wreck again? How in the world are we supposed to keep it clean?

The answer is we keep it clean by evaluating the clutter before we ever take it into our lives.

Do you remember when Jesus was entering into Jericho? He met a man named Zacchaeus, who was a tax collector and was very wealthy. He wanted to see Jesus, but being short, he couldn't see over the crowds. So, he ran ahead and climbed a tree to see him.

When Jesus reached the spot he looked up and told Zacchaeus that he wanted to come to his home. All the people murmured amongst themselves, saying 'He has gone to be the guest in the home of a sinner'.

But Zacchaeus stood up and told everyone, "Look! Now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount". (Luke 19:1-8)

What does Zacchaeus lunch date with Jesus have to do with the "keep it clean rule?" He knew that it is only by encountering Jesus we can learn the truth about clutter in our lives. When we clear out the clutter of our lives we can give priority to encountering Jesus - and he will reveal to us, personally, how to keep our heart clean.

God loves you and he only wants what is best for you. When He prunes and nudges us, it is done lovely and gently and it is for our good. Give Jesus the priority he deserves this year - and keep your heart clean from clutter.



## Day 21: Conclusion

The job is complete ... at least for now. Perhaps with concerted effort and an eye to Zacchaeus' example, I will be able to keep it clean. At least I will be able to short a portion of the cluster before I allow it into my heart.

In the future I will be accumulating more and more treasures that I can give away. My experiences increase with each passing day, as does wisdom gained from good and poor responses to those experiences.

Each day allows me the opportunity to create a new memory - and that's what makes memories good things to give away.

So is encouragement. I am convinced that encouragement is available in a new-ending supply. We don't need to ration it in fear that we only have a limited quality. The more encouragement we give away, the more we seem to have to give away. Faith and our faith experiences increase also.

That means more to give away and more to keep. Our faith is not static, it is active. There is always something current about our faith that we can give away.

The prayers we give away will never be depleted. The Bible tells us to pray without ceasing, so it is obvious that the reservoir is deep. We are to pray at all times. This doesn't mean we must fold our hands and bow our heads twenty-four hours a day. It means we have to have a God consciousness 24 hours a day. We are to be conscious of God in every aspect of our lives. He is not to be compartmentalized for notice on Sunday only. Praying without ceasing - having a God-consciousness - means that decisions, conversations and action will all be done knowing God is present.

So many things can be given away and so many can be kept at the same time. And always remember to give away treasures, not trash, jewels, not junk; good things, not garbage. That is the rule for the Give Away box.

Finally, keep God's word in your heart, mind and memory. Hiding it in your heart will help you not sin against God. Having His word in the Keep Box will also be a source of encouragement for you. Remember the words of Philippians 4:8 and the wonderful things we can keep and think on.

When you get it clean, keep it clean. The Lord will help you so that you don't throw out something that you need or keep garbage that you'll trip over until next year when you dejunk again.

## Your Choice

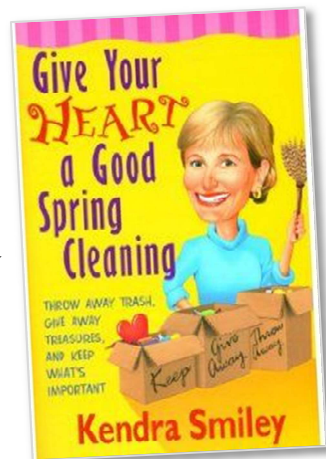
How have you done at spring cleaning your heart? Sorting through the stuff in your heart, mind and memory is a choice. No one can force you to do it. No one can order you to be honest with yourself as you sort and sift the clutter.

It is your choice whether to give away treasures or trash. It is your choice whether or not to dig in the trash. And it is your choice whether you keep the effort to keep it clean.

God will not force you either. He will however, equip you for the task and encourage you in the process. His word and the record of His work in people through the centuries assures us of this.

May your heart be clean and committed to God - in spring and every season.

This reason has been developed inspired by Kendra Smiley's book Give your Heart a Good Spring Clean written in 1999 and published by Servant Publications, Michigan.





*Southlakes*

ANGLICAN CHURCH  
MORISSET