

Clutter: Much deeper than just our stuff

We live in a culture of abundance. Many of us are able to buy every possession we need and more. We have a full selection of activities available to us. We own devices that can help us find information, stay entertained, updated, and connected to friends and family at all times. But our abundance comes at a serious price. We've filled our homes and our lives to overflowing but have neglected to see the damage it can do to us.

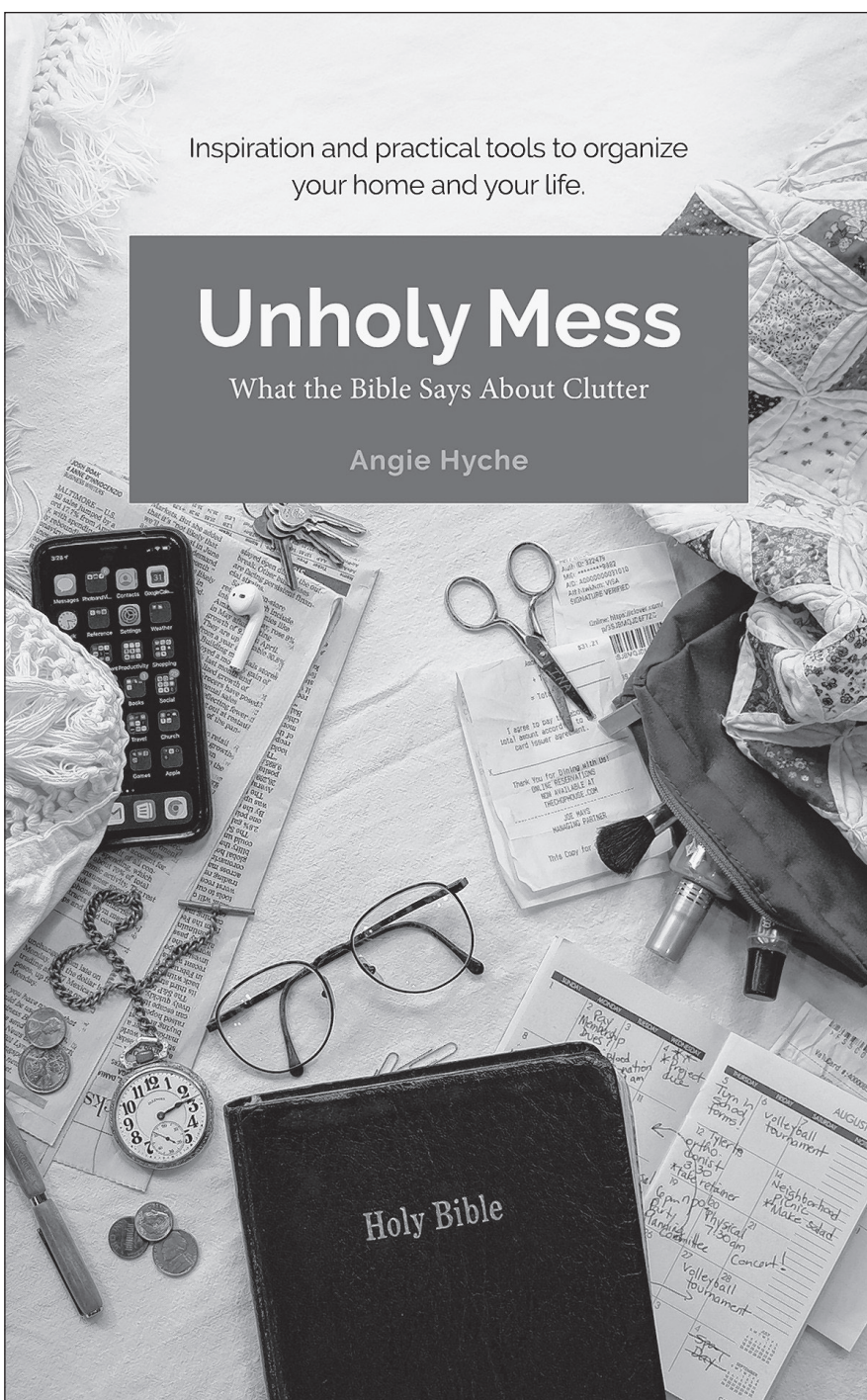
For the past four and a half years, I've helped clients declutter and get organized. One important lesson I've learned is that our stuff is just a small part of the problem. The deeper issue with clutter is that it distracts us from what is truly important. Whether it's a cluttered home, a cluttered schedule, or a cluttered mind, clutter draws our focus away from our true priorities.

I wrote my brand-new (and first) book, "Unholy Mess: What the Bible Says about Clutter," to help readers identify and conquer the clutter that distracts them from God. The book is a useful tool for anyone who feels they've lost their ability to focus on what really matters because their home, schedule and mind are cluttered with the insignificant. If you long for a deeper relationship with God that isn't crowded out by the unholy mess you've accumulated, this book is for you.

In order to fully comprehend how pervasive and damaging clutter is, we need to first understand its broader definition. When most people hear the word clutter, they usually picture a messy pile of stuff in some form of disarray. While clutter involving physical belongings is the most recognized form, clutter includes so much more than our stuff. More broadly speaking, clutter is anything that gets in the way of what we want and need to do. It's anything that doesn't contribute to reaching our goals. Clutter could include a list as diverse as this one: unused sports equipment, a hectic schedule, excess weight, outdated digital documents, an egotistical friend, and much more.

For Christians, addressing clutter is essential in order to serve God wholeheartedly. To have a close relationship with God and to put Him first in our lives, we must have a proper relationship with every other part of our lives. We need to put everything else into the proper perspective. God wants first place in our hearts because He knows that only when we put Him first will we truly be content. God made us, and He knows what will and won't bring us happiness. So often, we try to fill the void in our souls with everything except God. Even though we know logically that other things can't satisfy, we continue trying to fill the void with possessions, hobbies, money, relationships and anything else we think might work.

Beginning with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, mankind has been on a relentless search for fulfillment. Perhaps the most comprehensive search is found in Ecclesiastes. King Solomon's quest for meaning was extensive. He tried to find meaning in a host of things, including knowledge, work, advancement in position, wealth and pleasures of all kinds (wines, houses, vine-



yards, slaves, silver and gold, singers and a harem). Because he possessed immense wealth and power, he had the unique opportunity to exhaust every possible source of meaning.

Solomon tried it all. Each time he tried something new, Solomon concluded it didn't bring contentment. Solomon didn't find happiness in his work, in wealth, in power or in his relationships. And neither will we. Solomon didn't find happiness in any of the countless things he tried. And neither will we. We spend so much time and effort in this exhausting search for meaning and for happiness. But just like that old country song, we are "looking for love in all the wrong places."

I am passionate about shining the spotlight on clutter because clutter is an outward sign of deeper spiritual issues. As a Christian and a CPO® (Certified Professional

Organizer), I have a heartfelt desire to help people deal with their clutter on a spiritual level. My book, "Unholy Mess: What the Bible Says about Clutter," contains inspiration from the Bible plus practical tools to help you deal with all kinds of clutter. The ultimate goal of the book is to help you grow closer to God as you clear the distractions caused by your clutter.

Here is a sneak peek of some of the topics you'll find in the book:

- What a godly relationship with your possessions, your schedule and your attention looks like.
- Three simple steps you can use to organize every type of clutter, even the clutter in your mind.
- The prevalence of smartphone addiction, including some truly alarming statistics and tips for getting a handle on it.
- The importance of consistent routines for laundry, dishes and daily pickup.
- How to declutter every day without spending extra time or money.
- How to combat those pesky decluttering obstacles (even though ones like the "Buts": "But it's special," "But I paid good money for it," "But I don't have time" and "But I might need it someday").
- Practical tips to curb overspending habits.
- An honest admission of my own clutter issues (spoiler alert — it's not about stuff).
- An extensive list of clutter's effects, including depression, wasted time and money, poor academic performance, excess weight and more.
- Evidence of God as the ultimate organizer.
- A deep dive into Scriptures about spiritual perspectives and godly priorities.
- How to really change our habits using psychology and our natural personality.

"Unholy Mess" is available now on Amazon in both paperback and Kindle editions. I truly believe that it will be a helpful resource for Christians who want to live the abundant life that God has in store for them. I am currently scheduling presentations using the book's concepts. In light of the current situation with COVID, I anticipate they will need to be virtual presentations for the next few weeks at least. When the COVID situation allows, I would love to present in person. Presentations would be appropriate for any of the

following groups: ladies classes, mothers groups, senior groups, and Sunday school classes. Please email me (angie@beshipshape.com) if you would like to talk about scheduling a presentation for your group.

Are you ready to find the simplicity that lies beneath the clutter, to rekindle your passion for God, and to enjoy a peaceful and ordered life? "Unholy Mess: What the Bible Says about Clutter" will give you the tools you need to get there.

Angie Hyché is a professional organizer and the owner of Shipshape Solutions. Her first book, "Unholy Mess: What the Bible Says about Clutter" is now available for pre-order as an ebook on Amazon. Email her at angie@beshipshape.com.

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