

Jesus calls us to be intentional regarding how we spend our time, energy, and resources.

As we approach the beginning of a new program year, things can start to get a bit crazy. Calendars fill up. Work days (and evenings) grow long. We look at all the work that lies before us and wonder how will we get it all done in our limited time?

Jesus tells us in John 10:10, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” The abundant life Jesus describes in the Gospels is *not* an abundance of meetings, programs, emails, or scheduled commitments. Rather, the life Jesus wants for us is abundant because of the gifts God provides for us—our time, energy, talents, and resources. Jesus calls us to be intentional and prayerful regarding how we use these gifts.

Finding Abundance, Balance and Joy by Practicing Minimalism

In an attempt to simplify and clarify their lives, many people, including myself, have turned to the practice of [minimalism](#). The minimalism movement helps people to focus on what matters most in life and encourages removing that which gets in the way. Living a minimalist life is about distilling life down to what really matters and letting go of everything else. As a [Christian minimalist](#), this daily practice of living more simply is deeply connected with my faith and Scripture. By living more simply, I am better able to live abundantly in the Spirit.

The concept of minimalism is often tied to pairing down personal possessions - and that's a good way to start. But many times, our schedules (and our minds and hearts) need just as much minimizing and decluttering as our material possessions do.

With this in mind, here are 5 ways to simplify your life and focus on what really matters.

1. Let Some Stuff Go

Take a good, hard look at your schedule for the next few months. Be honest with yourself. What are the biggest time sucks on your calendar? Can you let some commitments go? What is scheduled that can be phased out over time? Which commitments do you dread when you

look over your schedule?

The goal is to truly listen to the Spirit's guidance and hear how God is calling you to spend your time, rather than just spending it how you think you're "supposed to" or what you think you are expected to.

2. Stop Saying Yes

We've all been there—we've said yes to a commitment or two or three (or ten!), even though it wasn't something we wanted to do or felt called to do. Saying yes so often means that we end up with an overly-packed schedule, and stressful days filled with commitments we don't actually feel committed to. We are the keeper of our own schedule. Stop saying yes, and be OK with saying no.

3. Take A Spiritual Gifts Assessment

Sometimes our schedules get over-full because we don't actually know what it is Jesus wants us to spend time on. Good news—there are assessments that can help you figure out what gifts God has personally given you to share with the world.

There are many spiritual gifts assessments out there, but [a quick and easy one can be found here](#). Once you know your spiritual gifts, you'll be better able to make the best use of your time using the gifts God has given you.

4. Pare Down TV, Social Media, and Technology Use

We all know that we all spend way too much time in front of screens. A recent study indicated that Americans spend more than 10 hours a day in front of a screen. Although some of that may be related to work and/or other useful activities like research or planning, if we are honest with ourselves, much of our screen time is either pacifying or an outright waste of time.

Start to narrow the time you spend watching TV or on social media by paring down the number of shows you watch or setting a timer when on social media or on your smartphone. You can also try a short-term technology fast, for 12 or 24 hours at a time, to break any bad screen habits. (You can make an exception and check out a [recent Lifelong Learning webinar](#) to learn more and find resources about balancing self-care and technology.)

5. Make Time For Prayer, Scripture, and Sabbath

Once you begin minimizing your schedule and discovering how to use the spiritual gifts the Spirit has given you, you'll discover more time available for that which we usually wish we had more time for—prayer, Scripture, and Sabbath/rest time.

In short, spend time with God. Spend time listening for God's voice and guidance as you go about your day. Subscribe to a reading plan and read a short passage from the Bible daily, listen for how God may be speaking through those words. Pray. Rest in God's presence and in the presence of loved ones.

Minimalism is all about focusing on what matters most. How is God calling you to live abundantly in a simpler lifestyle?

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