

Holy Simplicity: Clearing Away What Distracts, Burdens, or Falsely Defines Us So We Can Live More Freely (In the Home & In The Soul), Part 2

Katie Sciba

Hi, and welcome back. I'm Katie Sciba. Holy simplicity is, at its root, a healing practice, and the principle driving all of this is the Lord's particular will for our lives. That becomes our reference point. What distracts from that will leaves. What contributes to it? The possessions, time commitments, the rhythms that actually serve the life God is asking of us. Those get to stay. It's a simple enough idea, but lived out with honesty and trust, it reaches places that no organizational system ever could, and that's what we're here for.

Last time, we established purpose. We asked of a space and of a life, what is this for? Because without a sense of purpose, we have no way of knowing what belongs and what doesn't. Step two builds on that, and it is the most straightforward of the four steps. It doesn't ask hard questions or require deep discernment. It just asks you to be honest about what is clearly, obviously, no longer serving anyone.

Clear The Trash

Step two is clear the trash, and the fruit of this step is freedom. Let's start with a physical space because that's where most of us can see this in action most clearly. Trash in the context of holy simplicity is anything that is obviously broken or obsolete. It's expired, beyond use, empty. It's the stack of packaging that never made it to the trash can. The food wrappers on your desk. The dead batteries in the junk drawer. The things that call for no deliberation whatsoever. They're finished. But they're still here.

This step requires almost no critical thinking. You don't need to ask whether you love it or whether it might be useful someday. Garbage is garbage. The only question is why it's still here, and the answer usually is that we left it for later, and later never came. Trash to a space adds a layer of repellent. When it accumulates in that area, on a desk or on a counter, we begin to avoid that area. We find reasons to not go there. We work around it, step past it, close a door. And the longer we avoid it, the more it repels us.

A space overrun with trash doesn't just look bad. It conveys a message to us and says, "You're behind. You can't manage this. This is too much." And then we start to believe it. I had a client whose professional desk had become completely overwhelmed. Most of what covered it wasn't paperwork or files. It was food wrappers, empty plates, soda cans, the residue of a woman whose schedule and mind were both running at full capacity, who had simply stopped noticing what she was leaving behind.

This wasn't a reflection on her dignity or her capability, though she thought it was. She was sharp, very driven, and genuinely good at her work, but the trash began to take a toll. She told me she dreaded sitting down at her own desk. And when she did, she didn't stay long. The space was working against her. So we cleared it. Just the trash, nothing else. No reorganizing or deep decisions. And the whole process probably took seven minutes. But because trash becomes such a massive thing in our minds, we imagine it will demand much more of us. When the functional shape of her desk came back into view, something shifted in her face and in her body. There was relaxation. There was a breath and a glimmer of hope. That is what this step does. Trash obscures what is actually there. And when we remove it from a space, we begin to see it for what it actually is. The kitchen counter freed of empty packaging and expired coupons reveals itself. It has more room than you remembered. It functions better than you thought. Clearing the trash restores vision, and with vision comes momentum.

This is why I want you to start and start small. In the beginning of this process, don't go taking on the entire basement. Start with a small space that is frequently visited and visible. An entryway, a primary bathroom, or a nightstand, or a kitchen counter. Somewhere you encounter daily so the change registers daily. That reminder is what builds the momentum to keep going. Save the junk drawers and the deep storage for later, though it's terribly tempting to address that now.

Sometimes, The Trash is Unforgiveness

Right now, what we need is a small, clear, visible win. Everything I've just described about a space overrun with junk, the way it clouds the beauty, the way it repels, the way we avoid the places where it's built up, applies with striking precision to the interior life. The trash that collects in the soul is sin, but it isn't only sin. It's also the lies we've believed about ourselves for so long that they feel like facts. "You're too much." "You're not enough." "You are unredeemable." "Forgotten." These are wounds that have calcified, and they occupy interior space.

Sometimes, the trash is unforgiveness. Resentment held so long, it feels like part of the furniture. It's disguised as self-protection or justified anger. But it's garbage. It's heavy and it's in the way. Sometimes, it's grief that was never given enough room. Unprocessed grief takes up residence and makes the interior space harder to move through. Or maybe it's shame, distinct from guilt, which points to something that we did. Shame points to something we believe we are. It's among the most stubborn forms of interior clutter because it resists the truth.

All of these things, sin, lies, forgiveness, grief, shame, they all work the same way trash does. They weigh us down. Cloud our ability to see ourselves as we actually are, which is made in the image and likeness of God, co-heirs with Christ and beloved. When these things accumulate, truth becomes harder to believe. Not because it's less true, but because the trash is in the way. And like junk in a physical space, this interior weight is often a sign of something beneath it. A wound.

Julian of Norwich wrote something that has stayed with me for years. She said, "When God sees our sin, He sees the pain in us." The Lord is not standing over us in disgust, but in eagerness to see us whole again.

A Call To The Sacrament of Reconciliation

So, practically, what does step two look like in the interior life? It begins with an examination of conscience, inviting the Holy Spirit to reveal the inclinations within us that are working against who He fashioned us to be. This is a quiet, honest inventory made in the presence of a God who calmly extends an invitation rather than a harsh verdict. Ask Him to show you what is clearly working against His call in your life. The patterns that aren't bearing good fruit. The places where you have been stuck, resentful, or dishonest. And then go to confession.

Confession is where this step is completed, it's actualized. And the trash within our souls is actually removed instead of managed or worked around. The Lord takes it away entirely, and you're reconciled fully and completely to the Father. Confession is a sacrament of healing because it removes what has been covering our wounds, allowing our Lord to come into direct contact with our pain and free us.

Pope Saint John Paul II said that freedom is not the ability to do what we want. It's the ability to do what we ought. And what we ought to do is what the Lord made us to do. Saint Augustine said something that cuts deeply still. "The will is truly free when it is not the slave of vices and sins."

These two saints, centuries apart, pointing to the same reality. Freedom is the absence of what enslaves us, the presence of God. All of those things that enslaved us, the sin, the lies, shame, the things that we've been stepping around. The freedom in holy simplicity is something richer than the world's version. It is the freedom of a room that functions the way it was designed. The freedom of a desk you can actually sit at. The freedom of a soul that's no longer burdened by things it was never meant to carry. When we're reconciled to the Lord, we can live what we are made to live.

And there is, as my client experienced, standing in front of her clear desk, a glimmer of hope. Something that was in the way has been removed, and the Lord has made room. In the home, step two means a bag of trash and a little bit of time. In the soul, it means an examination of conscience and the gift of confession. Both require humility and give hope. Each reveals something that was hidden underneath. Once the obvious trash is gone, we see there is more work to do. We'll start to look around and notice there's still more here. Things that aren't trash exactly, things that might even be good, but for reasons we haven't quite yet examined, are still taking up space.

That's where we'll go in step three, remove what doesn't contribute. We're not asking this time, is this trash? We're asking, does this belong here? But for now, clear the trash. Start small. Start visible. And if you haven't been to confession in a while, let this be your invitation. The Lord is ready, and the space He makes in you when you go is always worth it. Let's pray.

Closing Prayer

Lord. Give us the honesty to see what is crowding our homes and our hearts. Give us the humility to bring it to You without shame and the trust to believe that what You reveal, You also restore. Clear what needs to be cleared. Make room for what is good. And remind us in this simple act of removing what doesn't belong, that You make all things new. Amen.

Be at peace.