



Spiritual Formation for Individuals and Groups

SIMPLICITY

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INTRODUCTION

Confessions of a Closet

When I first began learning about simplicity I decided to tackle a closet in our home that I called the black hole. The process, I thought, would be fairly straightforward. Empty the entire closet, face whatever was there, and ruthlessly, even prayerfully, discern if each item really belonged there. I began with a lot of energy, optimism and ambition.

Here is just some of what I found: six years of family photographs, a half-finished cross-stitch project that hadn't been touched since 1988 (cross-stitch is a type of needlework that nice Christian women did in the eighties), Christmas gifts I had purchased for family members at a summer sale two years earlier, and four years' worth of baby clothes waiting to be ironed (whoever invented baby clothes that require ironing must have been seriously deluded or heavily staffed). The finest moment came when my son Jeffrey, then seven years old, saw the ironing board and asked, "Hey Mom, what's that?" He had never seen one.

Whatever you think of my housekeeping skills, this was a closet full of duplicity. It was loaded with false versions of me. Some versions

were not real for that season of life; some were never real. While I had to fight off that shaming voice as I discarded and donated, I also felt the swelling of freedom and lightness. A deep sense that maybe, just maybe, it was okay to be who I was. That living within the boundaries of who I am is exactly what following God should look like. To cling to anything else means running my race heavily encumbered. Not everything that slows us down is sin, but if it slows us down from living the life we were designed to live, then it needs to be thrown off just the same.

My husband made the mistake of walking through my simplicity project and asked, “Mindy, I thought you were going to clean the closet?” It did look much better when the mess was hidden behind the closet door. We both laughed, and I reminded him—and myself—that this kind of work means things will get worse before they get better.

If you are willing to take a step toward simplicity, you’re in for a similar process. Sure, take on a garage, drawer or other black hole for starters, but the real work of simplicity lies when you open the doors of your interior world and start pulling everything out and holding it up to God’s discernment and love. You must ask yourself and God what stays, what goes and what, if anything, needs to be added. It may require enlisting the help of a spiritual director or close friend. The goal is to honestly and courageously determine what is in your life as a result of duplicity—living through a false self—and what is authentic.

The Path of Soul Care

Soul Care Resources are designed to offer a simple, but not simplistic, path for maintaining or recovering the life and health of your soul—that essential personhood created by God as *you*.

This book is divided into four experiences. Within each experience are four distinct parts that could be used as daily readings. Some parts are longer than others, so feel free to take more than a day to cover the material. Each part builds on the other, so you'll want to read one part at a time and reflect on the questions embedded in the text.

If daily readings aren't workable for you, just spending a day or two with each of the parts should allow you to comfortably complete one experience in a week, and the entire guide within about a month.

The fifth section of each part includes a discussion starter that you can use with a small group or friend if you wish.

I hope as you engage the path toward simplicity, you too will feel a swelling in your soul of freedom and lightness. A deep sense that maybe, just maybe, it's okay to be who you are. I hope you'll come to discover that living within your true self's identity is exactly what allows you to follow God completely, wholly. And, I hope that you will sense the wind in your hair, blowing across your face, as you run with great joy and intensity the unique race marked out by God just for you. Godspeed!