

THE JOYS OF A SIMPLER LIFE

Banish stress for good by
deciding what's really important to
you—and sticking to it!

You'd think that living in Southern California would mean I'd be surrounded by people who live a laid-back lifestyle.

The truth is just the opposite: Most of the people I know are trying to cram more and more into each day.

For instance, a couple of years ago I was driving down the interstate with a group of friends. At one point I realized most of us were engaged in some activity other than talking to one another. Two people were on their cell phones; another was working on his BlackBerry; and a fourth was focused on his laptop computer.

I declared that I felt left out and as a joke I called the driver, who was sitting right next to me, and we chatted together on our cell phones for a few minutes. The point of our traveling together in the van was so we could grab time to talk face-to-face! That's when I realized the truth—we couldn't get it all done, and God never intended for us to make completing a to-do list the purpose of our lives.

There are many things we think we must do that really are not worth doing. My point is this: You won't simplify your life by getting an electronic organizer. Simplifying is really about choices—prioritizing what is important—and then sticking to those

choices no matter how tempting it is to add more to your to-do list. In fact, take those tempting activities and put them on a list of things *not* to do.

You are the only one who can assume responsibility for your time and clarify what's really important to you. Maybe you're thinking, "But I have to be my son's class parent this year" or "I have to get this presentation ready for my boss by Friday." I'm not naïve about the pressures many women feel today (after all, I'm married to one), but it may be that those things—your children, your work—are the priorities you keep on your to-do list, and it's other things you move to the not-to-do list.

You may not like how complicated your life has become, yet with very few exceptions, no one is forcing you


to keep your life complicated. You have the power to simplify it.

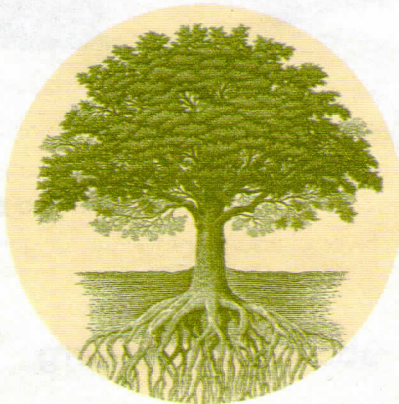
The Bible teaches, "We are each responsible for our own conduct" (Galatians 6:5). To me, that means God expects us to assume responsibility for our lives and to carefully choose how we spend our time.

That's why I've spent years teaching people to discover why God placed them on this planet. Ultimately, it will be the donation of your life that will count far more than the duration. It's not how long you live, or even how much you cram into how long you live. It's really about *how* you live.

There are three essential steps toward simplifying your life. First, figure out your purpose, then let your purpose guide the goals of your life. Second, organize your activities based on your purpose. Third, harmonize your schedule with your purpose; that is, bring your activities into agreement with your goals.

There is a price tag on every decision you make in life, even those that seem insignificant. Every time you give a minute of your life to anything, you're giving part of your life away. Once you start cutting back, God may be overjoyed that you finally got the message and stopped doing meaningless activities. He may even want you to add rest or fun to your to-do list.

My prayer for you is that you will find relief from stress and a new sense of satisfaction as you do only the things God created you to do. 



You can learn more about living The Purpose Driven Life by going to www.purposedrivenlife.com or by e-mailing Rick Warren at askrickanything@purposedrivenlife.com.