

ENOUGH

*Know When To Quit
& Let Go Of The Guilt*

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Introduction

To be clear, this is not a how-to book. It is not a “quick way to get” anything book. It is not a book about organization, planning, diets, or whatever processes you are already using (*unless they aren't working*).

This short little book is simply a story.
My story.

Actually it's more like a personal look at the journey that I've been on. And how I've learned *ever so slowly* (and continue to learn) about what “enough” means.

I, like probably many of you, have been plagued for most of my life with self-induced guilt. The kind that makes you go to bed at night feeling like a total failure.

I was stuck in this place where I was always questioning whether my days, my time, my life, was meaningful. Especially on the days that I couldn't be 100% in every area of life.

And while I believe in planning, discipline, and making an exceptional effort, I've also learned the truth of one little word. It has thrown my whole world upside down. That little word?

Enough.

In the midst of all the situations, obligations, and demands that I find myself in, I have learned to say, “Enough.”

I'm learning to slow down. Let go. Relax. Worry less. And most importantly, stop torturing myself in the process.

I have come to the conclusion that I can't do it all. Have it all. Be it all. All of the time.

I'm going to share some of the questions I found myself asking. I'm sure there are a couple that will sound familiar:

Am I good enough?
Am I doing enough for my spouse? My kids? My team or staff?
Is God really happy with my efforts? Are they enough?
Am I fit enough? Strong enough? Lean enough?
Is my house “homey” enough? Clean enough? Big enough? Organized enough?
Are my kids doing enough activities? Are they learning enough?
Am I doing enough?

In a single day we are bombarded with 101 different ways to feel like we’re “not enough.” The noise is deafening, especially the chatter that happens inside our own mind.

There is always someone with a more beautiful house. Their body is more fit and they obnoxiously eat **all the right things** *all of the time*. And someone else has a kid who behaves better, or excels in sports, school, the arts (or all of them). And then there’s “that person” who is crafty and whatever they put their hand to ends up beautiful and worth photographing. All the while your neighbor is making more money so they have nicer things than you do. *Many* nicer things.

As you go about your day, you find yourself wanting to delete every social media app on your phone because you've been sucked into the vortex of comparison. (And then move away, preferably to a 100-acre ranch in Montana, with no neighbors and no technology.)

This discontentment causes us to make poor choices. We wear ourselves out striving after what others have. And some of us wind up in a counselor’s chair years later, burnt out, fed up, and broken.

But I’m here to offer a breath of fresh air. Maybe something you haven’t heard very often. It sounds like this: “Enough... is enough.”

Actually, I like how Solomon wrote it in the book of Proverbs:

“Don’t wear yourself *trying to get rich*. Be wise enough to know when to quit” (Proverbs 23:4).

Now, I know this verse specifically refers to those who are killing themselves trying to get ahead financially. But I believe this wisdom can be applied across all areas of our lives. So get used to hearing these words, because we will be referencing this verse often.

I believe Solomon’s words are perfect for today’s over-scheduled, over-stimulated, over-stressed world. He wasn’t giving license to be lazy and forget about taking care of personal or family

needs. Rather, his caution is against working to acquire worldly wealth, which we cannot take with us into eternity.

Chasing success, attaining wealth, and living up to the expectations of others drains us physically, mentally, and emotionally. It wears us out, and that's why he encourages us to **“Be wise enough to know when to quit.”**

Notice he doesn't say *when* to quit, but just to exert wisdom. He believes we each know for ourselves where our quitting point is. We know our schedules, budget, and resources. We understand the needs of our family, as well as our own ability to handle stress. God has given us wisdom and Solomon encourages us to exercise it.

We need to stop wearing ourselves out trying to be the smartest or strongest, the most beautiful, or well “liked.” We need to give up the pursuit of being the wealthiest or healthiest. Instead of chasing after success or status, an ideal weight, or the most “influential platform,” we need to know when to say “Enough is enough.”

What I want you to see is that the focus of this verse is less on *what* we are wearing ourselves out doing. Because the truth is that *most of us are wearing ourselves out* (in at least one way). The powerful part of the verse is, “Be wise enough to know when to quit.”

The truth is that we *say* we don't struggle with comparison, or jealousy, but we do.

We chase after the dreams and successes of others. We wish away our own strengths and what we have been given, because what “they” have *looks* better. We think they are better. And we believe that what they are doing is more important, more successful, or more worthy of our time.

These are just a few of the many thoughts we will uncover in the following pages.

This book is a manifesto. It is me throwing my hands up in the air and shouting, “Enough!”

And I have a feeling if you're reading this, you'll be joining me by the time you're done. It is time to say enough. To let go of the guilt. To be wise enough to know when to quit.

Busy Enough

Cutting Through the Need for Activities

Let me know if this sounds familiar:

"I'm headed to work, then my kid's school play. We go to three different sporting events every weekend! I'm taking the kids to music lessons, and then I have to be at the church to set up for Bible study (which I still have to bake cookies for). I volunteer tomorrow in my kid's class, but before that I need to hit the gym with my friends. I have back-to-back meetings until dinner before I sit in traffic for an hour, when I'll get home late, after my kids are already in bed. I have a fundraiser today, and it's also my day for carpool."

Regardless of whether you are single or married, if you are a stay-at-home-mom of four or a go-to-work professional without children, there is probably some truth in the above paragraph. Your life is B-U-S-Y!

It has become the new norm. When most people are asked, "How are you doing?" their response is either "fine," or more often, "busy." Look the majority of people in the eye and they might confess "tired," or just exhale deeply as if to add an audible exclamation point to their answer. There is no longer such a thing as a "busy season."

We run from Labor Day into Halloween and then straight to Thanksgiving. The three weeks before Christmas is a full-on sprint. We slide into the New Year and barely breathe, before it's Valentine's Day, then spring break and Easter. From there we coast into the summer which is full of camps, activities, and family vacation. And then all of a sudden (like we didn't realize it was happening) the days get shorter, and it's fall again.

And chances are, you've given up on things like creative pursuits, date nights, or going to church because you just can't find the time. Perhaps you don't go to the gym anymore because you can't fit it into your over-packed calendar. But every time you catch your reflection in the mirror you bludgeon yourself on the inside for not "being in better shape." Maybe your friends are distant, not because they don't like you, but your schedule doesn't give you much time for socializing.

For a long time I found myself tired. A lot tired. Not from "new baby" weariness, although there was some of that. I was weary because I had said yes too often. I lived in a culture that equated being busy with success. As an A-type personality I wanted to be productive. I loved buying planners, highlighters and having daily to-do lists and monthly goals. But I was growing weary. To be honest, it was beyond that.

When we moved two years ago, I had the opportunity to step back and evaluate our lives. The calendar was, for the first time in a long time, empty. It was wonderful! I felt freedom to choose

the events, activities and people I wanted to make time for. I didn't say yes to very much in the beginning, and I weighed every opportunity that was presented.

Truthfully, moving was the best thing for our marriage and family. Because we were able to spend those first months connecting with each other and focusing on lots of quality time.

Now I know not everyone will have this option. We can't all pack up and leave our jobs, families, and community when we get overwhelmed. It just happened like that in my story. What we *can* all do, however, is come to grips with the fact that no one has the control that we do over our schedules. No one is forcing us to say yes to everything. The choice is ours.

I've heard so many moms complain about the amount of time they volunteer at their kid's school. When I ask if it is a requirement for their school, the answer is often "no." Yet they continue on with the schedule of doing things out of guilt, often neglecting things like the gym, getting together with friends, or pursuing their own creative interests.

And this is where the problem lies. Because most of the time what we agree to is not bad. No one forces us to say yes. But we feel guilty if we say no. We are fearful that we will disappoint someone. This leads to exhaustion. We become overwhelmed and frustrated. And the cycle continues.

It starts with a simple step. We must choose to say, "Enough!"

It takes practice. If you are a people-pleaser, it will take you even more practice. The first few times it may be hard. Because you don't want to let people down. You want to have the appearance that you care, that you're able to "do it all." *The truth is, no one can do it all.* Knowing how to let go of this guilt is part of the process.

We must know when to quit. And this means understanding our own breaking point. I started by taking a long look at the calendar. Being busy was not a scheduling problem. It wasn't a lack of organization or energy. It was a matter of the heart.

I found freedom in choosing to not be busy. It did not sentence me to a life of insignificance, or hiding away from human contact like a hermit. In fact, what happened was that the few things that I did say yes to, were more enjoyable. The relationships that I chose to build went much deeper. Overall, my life became richer and I felt more successful in what I was doing. So, I encourage you to do the same evaluation. Ask yourself, "What is filling my days, but robbing my time?" It is time for us to stop wearing ourselves out! It is time for us to say "Enough" to living as a slave to the calendar.

At our house, just like yours, we have some months where the schedule is a little more crazy than others. During these seasons I've found that I need to be more picky about how many events make it on the calendar in order to protect family time and date nights. Sometimes it means

going to fewer birthday parties, or getting together less often with friends. It has also meant fewer church activities and letting go of my workout regimen. It means taking activities like gymnastics off the calendar for a couple months, even though my kids loved going, because it's just one more thing that doesn't have to be on there.

A few years ago, the buzzword “margin” appeared. This new idea told us that we needed to schedule more rest into our lives. But the truth is, margin is not a new concept that suddenly surfaced after a late-night brainstorming session around a conference table. This idea was created by a Creator, just like everything else.

In Genesis 2:1-3 we read that God rested on the seventh day. I read this in a variety of translations and the text is clear: He rested from *all* His work. God, in all of His infinite wisdom, strength and power, took a breather. And *He took a full day*. He didn't skip out of work early on Friday, or work half a day on Sunday. He stopped working altogether and rested.

This was God modeling for us the importance of rest. He not only commanded we take a break each week, He showed us how to do it. Let's take that thought one step farther.

If there has ever been someone who *could* “get it all done,” it was God. Creation could have been completed in one day. He could have finished His to-do list in 24 hours. But He chose not to. So the question I started asking was, “Why do I feel like I need to get it all done in a day?”

We need to come to a place of recognizing what “busy enough” looks like. For ourselves, but also for the family, business, team and our own mental sanity. Because we are all wired differently and some of us (introverts unite) need more downtime than others.

Let's agree to stop worrying about what our neighbor or friend might think if we don't sign up for soccer this season. Forget about what our in-laws, Facebook friends, or the parents at school will think if we scale back at work, quit the gym, or step down from the PTA.

Enough of running from one event, meeting, or practice to the next. Enough of saying “yes” to late-night business meetings at the cost of family dinners. Enough of begrudgingly saying “yes” to every need presented instead of taking time to ask ourselves if we can really make it work.

Let's agree to stop. To let go. To make intentional decisions instead of saying yes out of guilt. It's time to say enough.

Discovery Questions

Take some time to write out (or look over) your calendar. Determine what is filling your days, but robbing your time.

1. What can be suspended for a time? What can be delegated?
2. Make a list of 3 things robbing your time that you can move *this week*.
3. List the things that you *want* to put on the schedule, but can't "find" time for (date nights, exercise, hobbies). Now, make time in your calendar *this week* for one of these items.

Clean Enough

My not-so-perfectly maintained home

If you are like me, your home has little people in it. I can't deny it or hide it, so I choose to embrace it. And along with it, the mess that inevitably comes with small children.

A couple years ago, I was not so calm about the mess. Actually, I was a little OCD about keeping everything picked up, wiped down, and organized. But then one day a friend told me that her mom was the same way. She remembers her mother telling her and her siblings that she was "too busy cleaning to come and play with them." When I heard those words it was a wake up call. Truthfully, I knew that I had been guilty of behaving the same way.

I knew the stress about having a perfectly maintained home was self-induced. My husband didn't care about dusting the bookshelves every week. If I let the laundry go two or three extra days, he wasn't breathing down my neck about it. My kids didn't care if I made their beds every day. They weren't concerned about lying on the floor to watch movies, even if there were remnants from last night's popcorn underneath them. The guilt came from me. It was a control issue and I realized it was affecting my relationships.

If I was having friends over later in the day, it meant getting up early to clean. It usually meant arguing with my husband and yelling at my children, and much unnecessary stress. Without a doubt every time we hosted small group or teams of volunteers, there would be yelling and fighting right up until the moment the door was opened. Of course, this was all because I wanted my home to look like the front of a Pottery Barn catalogue.

So that day, after visiting with my friend, I decided to throw out my cleaning routine. Immediately I felt a huge weight lift from my shoulders. Not because I don't care about a clean and orderly home. Because I do. And not because I'm a slob. Because I'm not. It's because I was choosing the more important thing.

I don't want to neglect my children in order to live in a perfectly clean and organized home. I don't want to miss play dates or activities simply because it is "bathroom cleaning" day on some

schedule I downloaded off Pinterest! And I definitely don't want my kids to remember hearing me say, "Mommy can't play with you right now; I'm busy cleaning."

I want them to remember making messes together in the kitchen, and playing with markers and glitter in the living room. I don't want to waste my days worrying about silly things like fingerprints on the windows or mirrors, or when I washed the kitchen floor last.

Don't get me wrong, my house is *relatively* clean. I'm not a hoarder, and I do enjoy organized spaces. My goal is to go to bed with my kitchen counters clear and clean. It happens most of the time. But truthfully, making beds doesn't.

When we moved and downsized into a much smaller place, it helped with the amount of cleaning I had to do. (To be honest the thought of moving into a bigger space with more housework makes me shudder.) I typically do a good job of staying on top of the laundry and the bathroom cleaning. But there are some items on the list that rarely get done.

Like cleaning the baseboards in our home. Or windexing the mirrors that are at small-child-level. *That* is a serious waste of my time! As is making sure that every toy finds its way back to its properly-labeled-and-color-coded-bin multiple times throughout the day. (*I apologize to any OCD readers who are probably flinching right now.*) I probably don't dust often enough, or get down on my hands and knees to scrub the floor behind the toilet (and I sleep quite well at night).

And this is why: at the end of my life I won't be crying over the hours I should have spent cleaning. I will not worry about, or regret, not having "the best kept" house.

No! I will probably regret all the time I wasted dusting shelves and picture frames right before my mother-in-law came to visit. Because I didn't want her to think I was incapable of keeping our home clean.

Let me tell you, I've wised up since those days. Now she comes over and there's food underneath the kitchen table from last night's dinner and dust on every horizontal surface. I can now breathe easy because I know that she doesn't care! She knows that having small children equals a messy home. And even if she did care, I am no longer concerned with what she, or anyone else, thinks my home should look like.

Friend, if you have the type of mother-in-law that does care about such things, know that I am very sorry. But the good news is, you can choose to not let that consume you any longer. You can find freedom in saying, “Enough is enough!”

Know when to quit. Understand *your* most important things for the day. For example, feeding and caring for your family would be at the top, and making sure you scrub the floor behind the toilet with a toothbrush, at the very bottom.

My true test came when we had new friends over for the first time. My husband was giving them a quick tour of our home and I suddenly remembered I hadn't made our bed. The floors in the living area had been vacuumed of the bits of raisins and crayons that are almost always present. I had prepared dinner and managed to wipe down the bathroom surfaces before they arrived. But our bedroom had not been touched.

When I later walked back through our room I realized that the closets were not only open, but so were our dresser drawers (which were spewing clothes). Our bathroom was a bit of a disaster, there were stacks of paperwork on the desk and floor underneath, and then there was all the random stuff that needs to get shoved somewhere when guests come over. And right in the middle of the room sat our large, unmade bed. It was interesting what happened after that night. Those people we had over, our new friends, are *still talking to us!* Actually, they are some of our closest friends.

Let's remember Solomon's words, “Don't wear yourself out [trying to maintain a perfectly clean home]. Be wise enough to know when to quit” (Proverbs 23:4).

For me “knowing when to quit” means I'm okay bringing people into my home even if there are dishes in the kitchen sink or bits of food under the kitchen table (this is something that I would not let happen just a couple years ago).

“Not wearing myself out cleaning” means I maintain the areas that are the most important for me, and choose not to stress about the rest.

Everyone has that one area of their home that must be maintained no matter what. I have several friends who make their bed as soon as they get out of it. It's the first chore of the day even before making a coffee. (I used to be like that, in my pre-children days.) For some people it's the

kitchen surfaces, or maybe you spray down your shower every time you're in it. Maybe your home office is immaculate, or it's the garden you treasure in your backyard.

Determine for yourself which space is the most important to regularly maintain, and then give yourself a break regarding the rest of your home. "Don't wear yourself out." **There are more important things in life than a perfectly maintained home, like spending time with the family that you share it with.**

Discovery Questions:

1. Has the cleanliness of your home caused unnecessary conflict with your family?
2. Determine what your few "key areas" are that must be maintained each day/week/month. This *cannot* be the whole house. Examples would be: the kitchen counters and sink every day, tending to the garden daily, doing all the laundry once a week, etc.
3. What chores can you delegate or hire out? (Can your spouse or older children help with the dishes or food preparation? Is there someone you can hire to vacuum, do laundry, or clean the bathrooms?)

Fit Enough

Being Healthy vs Being Big or Lean

I like the slogan "strong is the new beautiful." I've seen it plastered everywhere recently. I'm pretty sure that was Nike. I think it sends a good message. I want to have a strong body. And I want my daughters to grow up to be strong and see that as beautiful.

But sadly, for many people, this idea has become more about appearances than actually taking care of themselves. Some have become so consumed with strength (or losing weight) that they end up actually neglecting their health.

Having worked in alternative healthcare for a number of years, I've seen this first hand. Conversations with chiropractors, physical therapists, and dozens of trainers and coaches have been a part of my weekly repertoire. I have loved the opportunities to help people rehab from injuries and work towards better performance. It's been extremely rewarding.

But, I have also seen many people hurt themselves trying to "be strong." Others have wasted away their muscles adhering to a super-regimented diet. They were not only not happy, but they were also far from healthy.

I'm sure you know some people like this: those who live at the gym, but run on Starbucks, energy drinks, or fast food. They excitedly shop at Trader Joes, but everything purchased is packaged "warm and serve" food. Chances are you know a few "nutritional experts" who always share pictures on social media of their GF-organic-vegan meals that look anything but tasty. They know their way around the Whole30 rules, but couldn't do a push up, or run a mile. And then there are the ultra-runners whose lean appearance is actually quite worrisome.

I think there is a point where we need to say, "Enough." We need to work towards healthy eating and exercise. Being strong and fit are definitely good goals, but I think more of us need to be concerned about being healthy, instead of being ultra fit.

Let's be honest, most of us probably fall into the middle of the fitness/healthy eating spectrum. We run because it helps our middle, but we know it is even better for our heart. We have our ups and downs with the diet. Our seasons of stressors come and the workouts get relocated to the bottom of the priority list.

We get busy with work, with kids, and with life, and we snack frequently and eat dessert more than we should. My season usually begins the week before Thanksgiving and extends through the New Year.

Those of us in the middle are also the ones who make the New Year's resolution to "be healthier" next year. And we do it every year. But really, isn't it a good thing that our lifelong journey would be about becoming more and more healthy?

To switch gears, I believe being healthy means more than just choosing to exercise. When I'm at work I talk to people about exercise and diet, but also about choosing holistic options: fewer chemicals and toxins, more stretching, better rest, and staying well hydrated. Of course exercise is a big part of our health, but I believe it's important that our activity reflects our lifestyle, rather than committing to a thirty-day workout routine that we have no intention of maintaining after the month is over.

It's been a process, but I've learned to embrace this middle ground. I do my best to make good choices. And most importantly, I've stopped striving after someone else's version of "healthy." I no longer feel the need to look like the girl in spin class who has never had a baby and eats kale chips as a "treat."

Some of us need to avoid certain exercises due to past injuries, I get it. Many people need to maintain a strict diet. But I think we are often guilty of becoming so obsessed with fads and buzzwords that we forget the things that are important: movement *and* nutritional food.

Can we just talk about food for a quick moment since I believe that our consumption of food is interconnected with our health? And no, I'm not going to try and sell you on a diet. Even in our diets I want you to think about the idea of "Enough."

Truthfully, I tend to land on the healthier side of the spectrum more often, but that doesn't mean I make the best decision all of the time. I eat salad, and take a scoop of ice cream (*the good stuff*) for dessert. I go for a run, do yoga, and lift weights, but I don't beat myself up anymore when I can't fit in the 4+ weekly workouts like I want to.

I'm a big believer of moderation: my kids eat raw vegetables almost every day for lunch (*most days they actually request it*). But we also enjoy treats throughout the week (like a trip to our favorite donut shop) and do so without guilt.

I want my kids to grow up knowing what a Rice Krispie treat is, as much as I want them to know how to prepare and enjoy wholesome foods. Because life is too short to miss out on things like warm cookies and milk, birthday cupcakes, or ice cream.

Back to exercise: it's far more important that we actually enjoy the activities that we're doing, instead of trying to keep up with what someone else is doing. Because it's less likely we'll continue doing it after the blood pressure has gone down, or the inches have come off if it's only been about "working out" instead of creating and *maintaining* a healthy lifestyle.

So, if you like running, go for it. But if you're more of a yoga-paced person, grab a mat. If you love the outdoors, then hike, or surf, or ski. Rock-climbing, pilates, weight-lifting, or martial arts-- find the thing that not only helps you get a great workout, but makes you *feel* better, mentally and emotionally. Then make it part of your lifestyle.

After all this talk about embracing the middle ground and saying "Enough," I want to ask, are you wearing yourself out just to look strong? Are you solely focused on achieving a certain weight or measurement? Is it about really healthy living, or just portraying, that type of lifestyle? Are you striving after someone else's idea of what "healthy" looks like, eats like, or trains like?

Remember the second part of Proverbs 23:4 that says, "...Be wise enough to know when to quit."

It is time to quit chasing the goal of a perfect body or perfect measurements. We need to say "Enough" of neglecting the other things in life (like our family, friends and fun) because we won't give up the gym for even one day.

Enough is enough. Let's stop wearing ourselves down and annoying our friends and family in the process. Let's embrace healthy living and let go of the expectations, assumptions, and guilt.

Discovery questions:

1. Is your health regimen causing stress in your life?

The super regimented diet that causes daily arguing in your house?

The gym membership which you can't really afford?

The sessions with your chiseled personal trainer that create tension in your marriage?

The scale that stares back at you reminding you everyday of all that you aren't?

2. Where do you need to embrace the idea of enough?

3. Are you hanging on to someone else's version of what "healthy" is? Decide to let go of this guilt. Not sure where to start? Check out these ideas below:

Stop going to the class that leaves you feeling like less than everyone else.

Get rid of the scale.

Cancel the SELF magazine subscription (name your publication).

Stop following the person on social media who leaves you in a fit of comparison and jealousy.

Caring Enough

I Can't Care About Everything

The speaker talked about loving other people and other causes more than your family. I remember hearing the challenge and feeling the words sink deep into my heart.

To be clear, this is not the goal, but it tends to happen, doesn't it? The following were some of the questions I remember scribbling down:

Do you currently volunteer for something that you know little about (cancers, homelessness, human trafficking)? Have you ever supported a cause because you were asked to by a friend, relative or leader, instead of because it was something near to your heart? Do you put more effort into Sunday sermons or Bible study notes than you do teaching your children about Jesus? Does your blogging audience get more of your time and energy than your spouse does?

I spent weeks going back to these questions and answering them truthfully. Weeks of re-evaluating, asking for forgiveness and making plans to move forward with intention.

I decided I did not want to be guilty of devoting more time to nurturing the needs of others than those I lived with. I didn't want to cave to the suggestions, requests, and demands of others instead of listening to the voice in my heart. Somewhere along the way, I accepted the idea that "If I wasn't giving everywhere, then I wasn't giving enough." But that was simply not true.

In today's ultra-saturated, technology-driven culture, we are bombarded by people seeking our attention, donations, time, energy and support. "Stand up, speak up and make a difference!"

When we turn on the news and we hear that the world is going to hell in a hand-basket. The headlines are enough to ruin our day before it even begins.

Human trafficking is at an all time high. People are dying because of a lack of clean water. Feed the hungry. Send medicine to stop the spread of HIV/Aids. Orphans need families. The environment needs to be cleaned up. Our children need better education and we need politicians of greater integrity.

What happens when so many voices and causes compete for our attention? We get excited about helping others. And this is a good thing.

The bad part of this situation is that we tend to jump onto every committee, volunteer at every fundraiser, and lead every group that our pastor, best friend, or neighbor ask us to. We get in line behind what our favorite celebrity is doing and we get burned out giving, serving and caring for too many people. We end up doing a bunch of *good* things, instead of doing the one *great* thing that God intends for us to do.

Because He does. God intends for you to make a difference in the world. To care for others. To do great things! But this will look different for every person. And it should because we are all individually and uniquely gifted with talents, experiences and passions. These differences mean that our efforts to tackle big problems will produce results that are far better than if we were all fighting the same battles, in the same way.

For example, the Bible tells us to care about the orphan. God also commands us to assist the poor and to remember those persecuted and imprisoned for their faith. These are all great causes to rally around. However, I can't fight all of these battles. So I won't. Learning to say "no" meant that I had to let go of the guilt that would inevitably creep into my mind whether self-inflicted, or projected from others.

And a quick word on those who would pressure you or guilt you into stepping up to volunteer and serve in some way. Chances are, they are jealous of your confidence in saying, "no." Most people have never learned how to do this. It will probably catch some off guard. It's okay. They will find someone else to fill the position, do the work, or give the money.

Having a big heart and caring for others doesn't mean extending ourselves to everyone. We can't. It's not healthy. Something has to give. And often the things that give are the people we live with or our own personal health (physical, mental or emotional). Friend, please hear these words: what you're doing right now is probably *more than* enough.

We need to "be wise enough to know when to quit." We need to stop "wearing ourselves out." We cannot be superheroes to everyone. And only you know what that means.

For me, it means I say no more than I say yes. If I can help out in remote ways, that's been my sweet spot recently. I don't volunteer to do things because I know that I have two small children in tow *all the time*. And that's my personal choice, and I don't expect everyone to understand or do the same.

If you're someone who has 6-8 hours of kid-free time in the day when they are in school, then you have different options than I do. And if you work full-time, then your choices will look different again.

Regardless of whether you work full-time, part-time, or you stay at home with your twelve children as a homeschooling mom, your first responsibility is the family that God has entrusted to you. And I'm going to take that one step farther and say that I believe we need more "marriage-centered" families in today's culture, where the couple is strong and therefore the family thrives. This is our personal conviction, and I hope that it gains traction in our society.

Sadly, I think many people lose sight of caring for their families because they are serving in a large-scale or corporate way somewhere outside of the home. But it is not an excuse to forget about serving and caring for your family just because you are a church planter, activist or the head of a major nonprofit.

There have been too many pastors, politicians, and leaders in recent years talk about how they neglected their families because they were too busy taking care of other people, a church, team or cause. They live with that regret and the effects of those actions.

Another translation of our Proverbs theme verse reads this way, **"Don't ruin your health trying to get rich. If you are smart, you will give it up"** (*Easy-to-Read Version*).

I like that this version takes the "weariness" that we read in other translations to a whole new level. Note it says "ruin" your health, as in decay, or disrepair. And though, as stated earlier, the text is specifically referencing the pursuit of riches and our physical health, don't you think we sometimes ruin things other than our health? Like our relationships?

Don't try to keep up with the neighbor who heads up the PTA, volunteers at the homeless shelter and organizes the spring clean-up in your community. They either have older children, no children, or have help. Chances are, in order to do all those things well, they have other areas of their life that are in disrepair.

It is time we started intentionally focusing our **best efforts** towards the people that are already in our lives and toward the thing that God has placed in our heart to do. Let's stop wearing ourselves out and feeling crushed underneath a burden of guilt for "not doing more."

Discovery Questions:

1. Does your family fall second to those you care for outside your home?

Do you put more effort into Sunday sermons or Bible study notes than you do teaching your children about Jesus?

Do you spend hours preparing food for friends, neighbors or small groups, but expect your family to get take-out when it comes dinner time?

Does your online audience get more of your time and energy than your spouse does?

2. Are you guilty of volunteering at organizations that you know little about? Or have you spent time and energy fighting for causes that aren't really near to your heart, but others have convinced you "you should care about"?

3. Make a list of all the volunteering you do, or ways that you care for others. Now, determine which of these are actually near to your heart, or what you are doing out of obligation, or guilt.

Online Enough

Status Updates, Screens, and Social Media

There has been much said about how wonderful and dangerous the internet is; it can be a powerful tool, or hazardous to our health. Specifically, to our relational health.

Before we dive in, I want to state for the record that I don't hate the internet. Or technology. Or social media, and using it for personal or professional means. I am a writer, blogger, and have family in two separate countries. My phone is always on, and we are online a lot.

But I want to talk about social media, our devices, and knowing when to quit. Most importantly, I want to say that sometimes we really need to.

We all know people who treat their phone more like an extra appendage than a device. They cannot carry on a conversation with a live person without checking their phone at least four times. They are the people you hate going out for coffee with because the phone on the table is a constant reminder that their screen is more important than you are.

Then there is also the question about what qualifies as a worthwhile social media update. You know what I'm talking about. The parent who shares *all* of the up-close and personal details of potty training, diaper changing, or anything else involving a little person's bodily fluids. Or the tweets from people as a declaration of their sickness, relationship drama, fears, insecurities and failures.

For the record, I'm not saying you shouldn't write personal or private posts. I'm not suggesting giving up the constant feed about your children's antics. When my first daughter was born, Facebook was the way that I chose to update my family (who lives in another country) as well as the rest of the world.

These days much of my social media posts are still about my kids and the silly things they say ("Mom, I'm going to be batgirl at church tonight") the frustrating things they do (like hiding the cheese from their lunch under the rug in the dining room), and the way they drive me crazy. There is also a healthy diet of the sweet and amazing things that they do, just so that everyone in the entire world is aware that my kids *are* the best.

Undoubtedly there will be a day when my daughters are red-faced teenagers who stumble upon some ridiculous old image or quote that I threw haphazardly into cyberspace. (*This is where I should apologize to them in a public setting, but chances are I will enjoy their adolescent humiliation, so... I'm not going to.*)

Here's the thing: blowing up everyone's social media feed is totally fine, whether you do that with pictures of your kids, random quotes, and videos that make us laugh, or with political or

religious rants (that most people will ignore anyway). It is your little slice of the internet pie. So enjoy it. I just want you to think about *why* you are sharing what you share.

Will the picture inspire or encourage someone else? Will your words promote peace or cause strife? Will the video inspire others? Or will it only serve to make **you** feel better about yourself, your strengths, your achievements, your life?

Here's the bottom line: not everything in life is worth a social media update. If it takes you thirty minutes to get the right Instagram picture, but it makes you late for work, for a meeting, or for a friend, then maybe it's time to take a break.

Perhaps we need to try going without social media and devices for a little while. We need to know when to step back and say, "Enough is enough." Could you try an analog day or weekend? Or maybe you need to start smaller, and keep the phone away from the dinner table or in another room during meal and family time. Perhaps it's as easy as turning the notifications off.

Yes, let's talk about what it means to get "a notification." Is your self-esteem determined by your notifications? Does your security change based on how many people "like" you? (And not really even like "you," but rather like the perfectly styled and filtered pictures, your words which you edit for ten minutes before posting, and your overall image based on your need to compete with others.)

When you sit down to have coffee, or a meal, with someone, where is your phone? Is it in your pocket or purse? Or is it sitting face up on the table, ready to be checked ten times throughout your visit with your friend, spouse, or colleague? In case you aren't aware, the signal that this sends is that "being liked by" someone in cyberspace is *more fulfilling* to you than investing in the person across the table.

Remember the words in Proverbs: "don't wear yourself out." I believe a lot of us are. We are literally exhausting ourselves in order to have a louder voice, a better following, a more loyal tribe, or a growing business.

If this is you, own it. Be wise enough to know when to quit. Put the phone down. Shut your laptop. Be present with the person across the table. Make it a point to create time in your life that is technology-free.

We have worked hard to do this in our home, though some weeks we are more successful than others. No screens at the table. Notifications turned off. No phones in the bedroom. There are also certain times of the day when we ignore our devices and social media completely.

Perhaps you've already come to these conclusions; I'm seriously applauding you over here! And maybe for you all this talk about less technology and social media seems a bit drastic, and that's okay. We are all at different places in our journey, and "knowing when to quit" is a personal matter. Like everything else we've discussed, it is a matter of the heart.

I want to leave this topic with one final thought. When we come to the end of the day, and we haven't called our mom back, finished the book collecting dust on our nightstand, or taken our kids on that outing we promised to go on, *or didn't get to the other ten things on our to-do list*, we might just have to be honest and say, "if I got off social media, or if I relinquished time on my screen, would the quality of my life get better?"

Discovery Questions:

1. How much time do you *really* spend online in a day?

Do you complain about not having enough time in a day to get to everything on your to-do list?

2. Whenever you find yourself on social media ask yourself the following: why are you posting that information, picture, or paragraph? Is it something you would want to read or see? Does it add value to the people who might come across it (in their feed of 500 people)?

3. Are you guilty of finding significance in your notifications, instead of finding pleasure in real life relationships?

Churched Enough

Record Attendance Doesn't Mean Stronger Faith

This next section is specific to those who are part of a local church. If you are not, you should be. Just kidding, sort of. I believe that if you call yourself a Christian, you should be connected to a local church.

And if you have been a part of any church family for a reasonable amount of time, you understand that learning to say “Enough” regarding church is a hard lesson to learn.

Let me be clear before we go any further: I *love* being a part of the Church. And when I say that I’m referring not to a white building with a cross and a steeple, but to the group of people who gather as a faith community (usually inside of a “church” with a cross, steeple being optional these days).

We have served at and pastored several small and large churches in Canada and the U.S. over the years. I understand the purpose and power of the local church, and we (as well as our closest friends) are deeply rooted in a fellowship somewhere.

But I had a life-changing moment several years ago when I realized that my weeks were so full of church obligations that I didn’t have time to meet with anyone outside of our church community. It made me mad.

So I started saying no. A lot. And it made some people in our church *really* mad. I think I started sounding like a broken record. Maybe you can relate:

“No, I'm not going to women's Bible study or luncheon. No, I'm not going to MOPs (Mothers of Preschoolers) this fall. No, I'm not going to the women's retreat, craft night, bunko night, or movie night. No, I'm not interested in planning an event, volunteering in the food pantry, or helping in the high school ministry.”

It definitely took me a while to get to this place where I could let go of the guilt.

Now, not every church has a culture of heavy involvement and high expectations, but some do. They lay the guilt on *really heavy* if and when you say no. And sadly, we have started believing that being a “good Christian” means we need to be in the building every time the doors are open.

Friend, let me assure you that living a life of faith doesn't mean being a slave to your local church, its people, or schedule of events. Being there more often, or putting Christian activities on your calendar, does not equal growing in your faith.

Definitely there are some activities that do help to strengthen your faith. Small groups, Bible study, weekend worship services and teaching: these are all good options. There are also additional programs, ministries, and activities that you can be a part of. Depending on your church size there may be ten or 200 different options.

But what happens when the week flies by and we've been so busy doing "church" things that we've failed to engage with people outside our faith community?

How much time have we spent connecting with our neighbors and colleagues?

How well do we know the teachers and coaches of our children?

Do we know the name of the barista who custom-crafts our latte every morning, *and cheerily remembers our name?*

I get that this might be scary for some of you because you've grown up in a church family, and all of your socialization happens within its walls. Yes, it will require effort on our part to make intentional decisions and step out of church, and into the lives of the people around us.

It may mean we say no to *another* Bible study on "loving people" and instead do something practical with that knowledge. Like serving a neighbor, co-worker, or friend.

And again, to clarify, I'm not saying abandon your local church. Not at all. Attend your weekly services, serve where you feel called to serve, continue growing next to your friends.

What I am challenging is whether the excessive time and energy we spend doing "church" things is really doing much for us. **Is it making us stronger in our faith, or just providing us with social opportunities?**

Are we *really* serving the community in the ministry we are committed to, or is it more of a social club? Is every weeknight scheduled with meetings, rehearsals, planning and serving so much that it leaves us more drained than filled up?

Our theme verse in Proverbs 23 says, "Be wise enough to know when to quit." Another translation says it like this, "Be wise enough to restrain yourself" (*New English Translation*).

I like the choice of the words, "restrain yourself." It almost paints the perfect picture of what happens when someone has access to an excessive amount of something. If we are at a buffet, we have to be wise enough to restrain ourselves. If we are given a credit card for the first time with a giant spending limit, we need to be wise enough to show restraint. I believe the same is true in church circles.

As Christians we have an excessive amount of knowledge, teaching, and “ministry opportunity” always available to us. I believe we need to show restraint for more planning, prayer meetings, and teaching in lieu of actually going into our community and making a difference in people’s lives.

It is time to stop providing food only for those from inside our church walls, when the single mother living across the street struggles weekly to feed her family. Enough of more and more teaching, and less and less practical steps in loving others. We as the church need to stop hoarding our wealth of knowledge, of hope, of joy from the world that needs to know the reality of who Jesus is.

Make no mistake, God always intended for the church to be a blessing to the world. However, many people mistakenly assume that every act of serving needs to be accomplished inside the physical building, instead of through the arms of the church. Meaning, the people.

It is time to say “Enough” of church socializing masked as ministry, and start being intentional in the community where we live. There are needs all around us, not just inside our church walls.

Discovery Questions:

1. Examine whether the “ministries” you are a part of genuinely meet the needs of others, or has it really become a social club?
2. When was the last time you had someone from outside of your church in your home? (Or at the very least, out for coffee?)
3. How well do you know your neighbors? Your co-workers? The parents of your kids' friends?

Having Enough

What It Means To Embrace Contentment

"Someone else is happy with less than you have."

I remember the first time I read this quote. It was scribbled on a piece of lined paper and someone had taken a picture and posted it on Instagram. It was one of those pictures you scroll past, but then the weight of the words hits you and you go back. For days I thought about that seemingly insignificant picture. It rocked my world and tore up my heart.

I definitely agreed with the phrase, but that didn't make it any easier to swallow. Actually, while it may seem easy to recite such a simple sentiment, it's something entirely different to live it out. Especially where I live, in Orange County, California where the chase is on to acquire more, climb higher, and put on the most successful face possible. Living here is hard some days.

Why?

Because we live in a culture that tells us we can "have it all." And because we *can*, naturally we *want* it all. But just because we can, does that mean we should? We tell ourselves that we deserve to have nice things, better things, and more expensive things. We work hard, pay taxes, and give our money to good causes. So whatever is left over is at our discretion, *right?*

But most days the chase that we find ourselves in just leaves us with a bad case of "the wants." My husband and I use the words "the wants" to describe what happens when our daydreaming gets out of control. For example, when my husband walks through the Motorsports Exhibit Hall, or I spend too much time drooling over displays in Pottery Barn.

None of the things we "want" are bad things. They are just not needs for us. And when our "want-to-meter" starts going off, we know it is time to walk away and make a list of things we are thankful for. Like our health, our jobs, our family (and the technology to stay in touch with them), the friends who love us, the children we've been blessed with, and the list goes on and on.

When we look around and see the needs of others, from the street corner, to those projected through a screen from half a world away, we see people fighting physical battles and emotional wars: addictions, losses, and less.

They have less than what I have. And honestly, less than what I've *always* had. Even in my darkest moments of greatest need, I have always had much, much more than most people around the world.

The truth is, most of us have *more than enough*.

The chase for the bigger, better things will always be real. The voices of our culture tell us to acquire more and climb higher. This noise will always be there. Because it always has been. It is not a battle fought by our generation, by our hemisphere, or our technology-driven culture. **The war that threatens to destroy our contentment is the one raging inside our heart.**

Over and over we've read Proverbs 23 as a reference for other things in place of riches. Finally, we will read it in its original context: "Don't wear yourself *trying to get rich*. Be wise enough to know when to quit."

I think it's interesting that Solomon, the most wealthy man to have lived, specifically challenges those who were running after riches. Let me share his words from a couple different translations,

"Don't ruin your health trying to get rich. If you are smart, you will give it up." (ERV)

"Do not weary yourself to gain wealth; cease from your consideration of it." (NASB)

"Do not overwork to be rich; because of your own understanding, cease!" (NKJV)

I wonder what would happen if we simply said, "I have enough." What if we actually understood the fallacy of chasing after wealth like it is the meaning of life? Perhaps it's not the stock portfolio, the retirement plan, or the savings account that keeps you up at night. Maybe it's that your neighbor just brought home the latest model of your favorite car, and now you feel an upgrade is in order. It's the twinge of jealousy you feel every time you're in "her" home with the beautiful floors, fabrics, wall hangings, pool, gardens, or fill-in-the-blank.

You may not be after the power, title, or the salary number, but your sights are set on the vacations, the status, and the luxuries you've always dreamed of. It's not an exorbitant life, just a "better" life that you want to give your kids. Or at least *portray* to others that you can afford. (Seriously, who can afford a Harvard education anyway?)

Let me ask the big question: when will it ever be enough? Will you be happy when you get the big promotion, the bonus, or the corner office? When you can retire early because you've saved enough, will you quit then, or just move on to another project?

Being content is not dependent on a number. It is a heart issue, just like everything else we've discussed.

Some of the most content people I know live half-a-world away. They live on far less than what I we do, and our families are the same size. For ten years they have lived in a foreign country, serving people that most have overlooked. They are raising their children in a small apartment, dependent and grateful for the generosity of others. Their life's work is incredibly rewarding, and because of that they have left behind the big salaries, retirement funds, and promise of a luxurious lifestyle and future. Their lives are simple, their hearts are big, and I write these words with such gratitude for their friendship and example.

I think most of us would do well to take mental inventory of our lives and to keep gratitude journals close by. All I have to do lately is turn on an episode of "House Hunters" off Netflix to get a healthy dose of perspective.

I hear the alarms of the "want-to-meter" going off as I watch families of four complain about their "too small" home of 2500 square feet. I watch couples without children say they need a home with 4 bedrooms and a 3-car garage. I see individuals gripe about granite, appliance colors, and a ten minute commute. Usually one episode is all I can stomach. It is enough for me to walk away and feel a deep sense of gratitude for what I have.

Whether you are in your twenties and just starting out in your career, wondering how you'll pay rent this month, or in middle life where the pressure is on to look like you're doing well and keeping up with everyone else on your street, I challenge you, "Do not overwork to be rich."

Maybe you are in the later part of your life with grandkids and no more mortgage, but you're hoarding what you've worked hard for instead of being generous. Or maybe you're still working as hard as you were twenty-five years ago, even though you have more than you'll ever need. To you I say, "Be wise enough to know when to quit."

Better yet, let's do even better. Let's forget about the idea of contentment altogether and push ourselves towards embracing generosity. To live on less, give more and choose to see what we have been blessed with as a treasure that we are mere stewards of.

Discovery Question:

1. Are you guilty of letting “the wants” get the better of you?
2. Are you wearing yourself out in order to have “just a little more”?
3. Are you living month to month under a burden of debt and guilt? Do you suffer from depression because you are strangled by comparison and jealousy?

Conclusion

I remember many years ago sitting in a leadership seminar and the speaker explaining the 90/10 rule.

It was the idea that, statistically speaking, the effort we exert on a project for the extra 10% is hardly worth it. He acknowledged that the effort to get from 90-100% is usually much greater than what it took to achieve 90%. He was not condoning poor or sloppy efforts at all. He was encouraging the group to be excellent, but not strive after perfection. He was a leader who demanded excellence, integrity, and passion from every person that worked for him. I knew this first hand.

Recently I heard a medical doctor offer a similar suggestion. He claimed that eating clean 80%-90% of the time allows people the freedom to enjoy the special occasion treats without tanking their diet, and doing so without loads of guilt afterwards. He offered up things like birthday cake and ice cream. I add to that my personal favorites: cookies and donuts. Whether it's 80/20, or 90/10 – I hope you've heard loud and clear one word above the rest.

Enough.

Enough of succumbing to the pressure of having to have pin-worthy meals on the table three times a day (that are all organic, gluten free and GMO-free no less).

Enough of believing that being healthy requires Crossfit classes, running ten miles every day of the week, or hitting a specific number on the scale.

Enough of thinking that our homes must look like a museum in their cleanliness, or a Pottery Barn catalogue with the organization and decor.

Enough of wearing ourselves out.

When we “serve” in the community, or at church, it should never come at the cost of our families. And as much as our social calendars are important, date nights with our spouses need to take priority. Even over socializing with friends, or family nights.

And while we are busy building something of importance that is marketable, creative, and supports our family, we also need to be there for our family. Physically and mentally. (Put the cell phone down!)

We need to make messes and be spontaneous and make the effort to schedule in fun. We need to bake cookies, take a walk, and turn off the screens. We need to do less chores on Saturday morning, and make more donut shop runs. (And no, I don't mean the vegan, gluten-free type.)

We need to serve where we feel called to serve, not where we feel pressured to. And above all, we need to realize that contentment comes from within and is not dictated by our net worth.

I hope this is what you'll commit to. A life that is no longer driven to excessive places, where our hearts and bodies are tortured trying to achieve or arrive. A life where we aren't wearing ourselves out trying to "make it" in whatever area we are most obsessed over.

These words have not been easy to write. I'm not always good at following Solomon's wisdom. I continue to grow in the art of "letting go" in several parts of my life.

But I'm learning. And growing. And the more I do, the more I want others to experience this freedom that I've found. Because feeling alone in your self-resentment, in the striving after perfection and the exasperation of your efforts, is the worst part.

So, if you've ever gone to bed in tears, feeling like the word failure is about to suffocate you, know that you are not alone. If you've ever wondered if anyone else could understand your frustrations and self-inflicted guilt, please know, you are not alone.

Together, let's let go of the guilt and embrace "Enough". Instead of feeling defeated, shamed and alone, let's be wise enough to know when to quit.

Enough is enough. It really is.

Acknowledgements

Thank you Alex, for believing in me, pushing me, and reading over every word in this process.

Thank you Cassandra and Ashley for your time and red pens, because clearly I need help.

Thank you Tabitha, for helping me rework ideas, paragraphs, and stories. I appreciate your willingness to listen and your encouragement. Your friendship has been a divine blessing.

Thank you to the friends and family who have endured the refining process over the years as I've stepped off the edge and into the world of "enough." I wasn't always fun to be friends with, and I apologize for not having any understanding of the word "grace." Hopefully our relationships will only get better from here.

Thank you to all of you who keep coming back and reading. Thank you for sharing your own stories, for leaving notes of encouragement, and for sharpening me as much as (hopefully) I do you.

And finally, thank you God. For pouring this love of words into my heart before I could even form them. Thank you for loving me, guiding me, and bringing me to this place of *Enough*. To this place of confidence in the gifts You've given to me, the plan You have for me, and the future that is yet to be written. Undeserved grace is what I live in daily; without You, I am nothing.