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*Bringing God's Peace, Perspective,  
and Purpose to Today's Busy Woman*

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Through Everyday  
Examples**

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# Breaking Free Creeping Clu

As a professional organizer, I've learned a lot from the trenches of disordered homes across America. Yes, organizing can save time and money. But one of the most rewarding results of ordering your environment is the peace of mind that follows. When we invest the time, energy and resources into restoring order to our space, a new clarity arises. When things are sensibly arranged, we can think straight and operate to our highest capacity.

A lot of people mistakenly equate being organized with being rigid and lacking creativity. On the contrary, I've observed repeatedly that coming out of a state of chaos into a state of order actually renews energy and creativity to the person and to her environment. Organization releases clarity of mind to concentrate, express creativity and live abundantly.

We all recognize household clutter: nomadic hair clips on the kitchen counter, mysterious socks on the desk, a growing pile of outdated coupons, or the ghastly gifts we feel guilty tossing. Clutter, as I define it, is an assortment of "unknowns." These "unknowns" are undefined because they either a) have no destination, b) are incomplete tasks, or c) require a decision.

The reasons people have difficulty clearing clutter are the very reasons the items have become clutter in the first place! Clutter collectors may have never defined destinations for the items to live or may be dodging the discipline of

returning items to their appropriate locations. Sometimes, paper or belongings must be gathered from different locations to complete a project (like tax documents or scattered craft supplies). Other times, clutter develops because of procrastination. We put off unsavory tasks or those that force us to render a decision. Quite often, if we don't know what to do with something, we just set it aside.

The clutter bug often finds herself paying the piper for her nasty little clutter habit. Usually, this comes in the form of missed deadlines or fruitless searches for an item amidst the sea of creeping clutter. By now, the clutter bug has reached "the point of pain." A decision to face the "unknowns" is made. It would be more painful, the collector determines, to stay buried in clutter than to dig out from the chaos. After reaching this critical, motivating "point of pain," I've seen many clients tackle their clutter successfully.

The first step is to define a location for every type of item within the household. I call this **purposing your space**. Once we've assigned a purpose to each space of the home it will be easier to corral clutter. For example, once we know that all hair products live in bathrooms, we must devise a system for returning clips, sprays and combs to those locations. Paper tends to morph throughout the house, so we settle on one or two processing areas for different kinds of paper, usually a receiving area and a final destination.

# From ter

by Vicki Norris


Determining tasks for each room aids in this process, because the items that serve those activities will automatically be assigned a nearby location. Deduction and common sense can be used to resolve the remaining "unknown" items without homes.

The second step is to **list the projects or tasks that are represented by the creeping clutter and schedule them.** If craft and hobby supplies keep popping up in a clutter pile, either they don't have a home, they are not being returned to their proper home, or they are not being used. Perhaps it is time to retire that craft, or schedule a time to work on it. If advertisements are consistently lying around the house, they may represent our good intentions to redeem a coupon, attend a sale or purchase an item. Whatever the case, we should schedule that task or let ourselves off the hook in the future.

The last, and most challenging step is to **make a decision about the individual items that are causing our clutter.** This is a psychological obstacle for some. Letting go and pruning back our overage may mean tearing down our guilt about unused gifts, or a size that no longer fits. Giving ourselves permission to clear out unimportant items makes room in our life for what IS important to us. And that is what organizing is all about.

Most people would love to rid themselves of household clutter, but they've bought into the commercialized version of organizing. They think organizing can be achieved with plastic bins and quick fix shortcuts. As a seasoned professional organizer, I can tell you those shortcuts never last. If you want to kick clutter out the door for good, you can begin by following the steps I've shared and embracing organizing as an investment in your quality of life.

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*Most homes acquire an accumulation of things which do not have a known destination or urgent due date. This can cause an invasion of the clutter bug. Bring purpose to your space and peace of mind as you following the basic steps to breaking free from clutter.*



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Registration for this year's conference is underway and everyone is excited about the new offerings we have this year. In 2006, we asked what additions you wanted to see at She Speaks in 2007 and you told us...

You asked for sessions that would provide leaders in women's ministry with creative ways to reach their community, plan events, organize volunteers and small groups, and the opportunity to network with other leaders in women's ministry.

You asked if you could bring your daughters, your nieces, young women at your church, so they could be equipped and encouraged in their calling to speak and write for the Kingdom, and be an influence for their generation within their community and beyond.

You asked - we listened. This year, in addition to the Speakers and Writers tracks, we have added the Women's Ministry Leadership track and The Next Generation track. Detailed information on each of these tracks, as well as descriptions of sessions, registration information, and a list of editors and publishers who will be attending, can be found on our website. Just go to [www.proverbs31.org](http://www.proverbs31.org) and click on She Speaks for up-to-date information.



**June 22-24, 2007**  
**Charlotte, North Carolina**

*"The conference is certainly a wonderful training opportunity for speakers and writers, but it is so much more. I have never been to a more spiritual conference."*

From an attendee of  
She Speaks 2006

### **Breaking Free From Creeping Clutter ... continued from page 5**

Every successful organizing project includes at least three parts: 1) dealing with backlog, 2) setting up improved systems to self-manage in the future, and 3) maintenance. In the case of clutter, by purposing the individual rooms of your home, you can address the backlog. By scheduling and activating tasks related to your backlog, you will begin to address your habits. Finally, by making new decisions to let go and lighten up, you will maintain your hard work and make room in your life for the things that really matter. ❧

Vicki Norris, author of "Restoring Order™: Organizing Strategies to Reclaim Your Life™" and "Restoring Order™ to Your Home" is an expert organizer, business owner, speaker and television personality who inspires people to live out their priorities. Norris is a regular on HGTV's nationally syndicated *Mission: Organization*, and is a recurrent source and contributor to national lifestyle publications.

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Proverbs 31 Ministries is pleased to offer Vicki's book, "Restoring Order" in this issue of the magazine. Please see the back page for ordering information.

My moment of introspection over, it was me to pull off of the exit ramp. Slowing to a stop, I saw just ahead of me to the left of traffic, shabbily dressed, bearded man sitting cross-legged on the ground. In his hand he held a cardboard sign that said in scribbled letters: Homeless. Hungry. Praying for someone to help. God bless." Oh no, I thought. *I never know what to do in these situations.*

Handing out money didn't seem wise, but was also uncomfortable with the idea of callously driving past him. Traffic began to move. With only an instant to react, a thought came. I quickly pushed my automatic window down, picked up our boxed bread sticks and placed them into the man's now outstretched hands. I barely had time to glance at his grateful smile as I pushed the accelerator and drove on.

I nearly jumped out of my seat when instantaneously the van erupted into thunderous applause and loud cheers. "Yeah, Mom!" my son shouted. "Way to go, Mrs. Foster!" one of the other kids yelled. For several minutes the kids kept clapping, talking about what had just happened. "Did you see the surprise on his face?" one kid asked. "I bet he'll love those. They were still warm!" said another. Then finally one of them said, "That was such a cool thing to do!" Then they slipped back into singing along with the radio and talking among themselves.

I shook my head, astonished by their reaction, glad that I had obeyed the Holy Spirit's urging to act instead of drive by. The funny thing is, I hadn't known the kids were watching. And yet they were. In that moment I realized I still have countless opportunities to impact the lives of my children. It may not be so much in my words, but in the spontaneous daily decisions to display compassion, or in taking every opportunity to share grace with others rather than keeping it to myself. It may be less about sermonizing and more about feeding the hungry souls God places in my path. ❧

Terri Foster is a writer who lives in Matthews, North Carolina with her husband, Rob, and their four children. Terri is a graduate of She Speaks - the Proverbs 31 Writers and Speakers Conference.