

Final Week of the 2-Week Series, "TIDYING UP"

## THE MAGICAL EFFECT OF TIDYING

March 8, 2020

Rev. Richard Maraj

**Rev. Richard Maraj:** Good morning, everyone! And welcome to everyone who tunes in online during the week. Special shout out to Angelica, who watches us in Sweden. And so, Välsignelser!

**[Congregation laughs]**

I don't know what that means, either! But I think it's Swedish!

**[Congregation laughs]**

It means, "Blessings."

So this morning, at the first service, I didn't tell a joke, and someone actually complained.

**[Congregation laughs]**

And so, um, I'm actually in shock about that. But I'm going to tell them now, but you'll probably see why I was not going to tell any jokes. So here we go...

What time does a duck wake up? At the "quack" of dawn!

**[Congregation laughs – drum rimshot]**

Hey! Did you hear the one about the guy who went into the library and asked the librarian for books on paranoia? And then she leaned in to him and said, **[whispers]** "They're right behind you."

**[Congregation and Rev. Maraj laugh]**

That was my favorite! And the last one: did you hear about the new restaurant on the moon? Good food; no atmosphere.

**[Congregation laughs – drum rimshot]**

**[Rev. Maraj laughs]**

So how many people have ever gone to Costco and bought more and spent more than you needed or intended? Anybody?

**[Congregation laughs]**

How many people admit that you have some piece of clothing or accessory or item in your house where you have a ridiculously excessive amount of them? Ties? Shoes? Belts? Jewelry? Cars? Houses? Spouses?

**[Congregation laughs]**

Whatever it is! I bet there's somewhere you have an excess of something! And the final one is this: so how many people here have so much stuff in your house that – at some point or currently – you have a storage unit off of your house stuffed with stuff, as well? Anybody have some of that?

There is no question we all have a lot of "stuff." There's a country song that says, "I like it; I love it; I want more of it!" And apparently, that's how we are with stuff. And it's pretty serious... Do you know one of the fastest growing industries in our U.S. economy is self-storage units? Last year \$39.5 billion –

with a “B” – is what Americans spent on storing our stuff. It’s such a growing industry of us wanting more and more, that they project it will continue to grow significantly, at least for the next five years.

There’s nothing wrong with having “stuff.” But there’s a threshold line that having so much stuff begins to drain our energy, distract our mind, cause us stress, and reduce our level of peace and joy. The very opposite of why we would get our stuff is actually happening in our lives.

Today we wrap up a powerful two-week series on Marie Kondo’s fabulous book called, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*. And I love how bold! Those are some bold promises! “*The life-changing magic of tidying up!*” And I love this book more than I thought I would, because of her conviction and passion and belief that – if you tidy up and get things in order, and declutter your life – things will change and improve for you. The quality of your life will get better.

Here’s what she says: “*A dramatic reorganization of the home causes correspondingly dramatic changes in lifestyle and perspective. If you follow this advice, you will dramatically reduce the volume of things you own, experience an exhilaration like you’ve never known before, and gain confidence in all areas of your life.*”

Tidying is more than just about clothes. Tidying is a tool that will shift and transform us and expand and open our lives to experience more joy and more fulfillment in all areas. Here’s some of the principles she talks about.

Number one: do it all at once. Make it an event that you commit to, and complete it all at once. Sometimes we like to clean out stuff in the spring or once in a while, or periodically... But she’s saying make it a committed, serious event if you’re ready to change. And that dramatic change in how you organize your stuff and get rid of stuff will actually bring changes in your life.

Second thing: do it category by category. We have stuff of different kinds in all kinds of different rooms. She’s saying do one category at a time; complete it, and then move on to the next, and the next. She says, first clothing; second, books; third is papers; and fourth is mementos. And when you complete it, it will actually create a system and make things better for you.

And then, the final thing is: discard first, not store. Most of us just want to go buy more storage tubs, and we’re putting junk away – or stuff we don’t need. And sometimes we don’t even know; and it’s actually still clogging up! It’s organized, but it is not really tidied up. It’s just out of the way, but taking up more and more space.

And so, two other things that are part of this process – that I think are really neat – is that she says: take all of your clothes from all of the sources, and all of the areas, and put it in one spot, and have a real good look at it. You have to know what you have, and be aware of what you have – and how much you have – if you’re really going to make some changes and make a difference. You’ve got to see it; you’ve got to face it; and you’ve got to acknowledge your stuff... how much stuff we really have. Because sometimes we want to deny, or we don’t really know! Like, you ever have a closet that’s so full that you didn’t even want to go there?

What this is saying is: it’s more than just about tidying up. It’s a life principle. If you want your life to get better, guess what? You’ve got to face your stuff! You’ve got to come to terms and acknowledge everything, and what’s really going on. Because sometimes – often in life – there are things we want to avoid. Things we want to pretend. Things we want to bury our heads about.

Anybody ever have to have a tough conversation – something you really wanted to avoid? Even when you knew it was important! Sometimes we have so much stuff going on in life, it’s overwhelming. We

just pretend and just keep moving. But life will never get better unless we face and come to terms with what's really going on.

She says this: *"Getting rid of our clutter forces us to look at our inner states."* To look at the inner clutter: of things we have not dealt with, that we don't deal with. Things we haven't felt, and things that we haven't healed. And the only way life is going to get any better is – at some point – we've got to look at it. We've got to face it. We've got to deal with it.

And the second thing she does is – when you've got it all there – take one item at a time, and ask this simple, but powerful, question: *"Does this spark my joy?"* Does this spark my joy? I've been eliminating stuff... Going through it and giving away. It's good; it's bad; it's old; it's worn out. All those things. But I'll tell you, pausing and holding each piece, and saying, *"Does this spark my joy?"* has literally transformed and deepened the experience of actually decluttering and getting organized. It seems like a simple question, but it is more profound, because it takes it – not only to a physical level – but to a mental, level, an emotional level, and a spiritual level. *"Does this spark my joy?"*

Let's say that together!

**[With congregation]:** *"Does this spark my joy?"*

Take a deep breath... Say it again, slightly softer voice:

**[With congregation]:** *"Does this spark my joy?"*

Deep breath. Again:

**[With congregation]:** *"Does this spark my joy?"*

Literally asking ourselves that question – with every single item – does something amazing. And I kept thinking, *"Why is it so amazing?!"* Because I found it very powerful! And here's the reason: because joy is our nature. When babies are born, they call them a bundle of ...

**[Congregation]:** Joy!

And it says in Scripture, *"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord."* And it says in Philippians, *"When you face many trials, count it all joy."* Jesus even said, *"I came that my joy might be in you, and your joy may be complete."*

You know why I think that question's so powerful? Because it invites us to go deeper and connect with our true nature: go deeper and connect with the joy that's always been there, and the joy that we all want to experience in our lives. It's a powerful, powerful question. So powerful a question! I want to talk about the three things that it helps us do, that helps transform our lives and experience the magic of tidying up.

The first thing that asking the question, *"Does this spark my joy?"* is help us get to a place where we can discard or let go of those particular things. Letting go is not something we do particularly well in our culture. And there are two main reasons.

Number one: holding on is something we mentally believe makes us safe. Holding on – like, you ever get scared and you go **[quick intake of breath like a gasp]**? It's like we hold our breath! When we get scared, we tend to hold... hold on, because we want to feel safe. We don't want things to fall apart. We have this tendency of holding on. And then when it comes to let go, we're afraid to let go... even giving away our stuff! It's like, *"Hey! No, no! I might need that one day!"*

**[Congregation laughs]**

*“Yeah; I know I have two. I have a second one just in case that one breaks!”*

**[Congregation laughs]**

We have all kinds of excuses of why to not let go. Because we have this tendency to want to hold on.

And do you know what’s interesting? Sometimes we hold on to things that aren’t even good for us. Things that we don’t even like! Things that we don’t even want! And, yet, we have this tendency. So it’s not an easy thing to let go.

The second reason that letting go is hard for us is: we are captured by the idea that more is better. If you want a better life, *“I want more of this, more of that.”* We think that a better life is a matter of addition. *“If I just add more money or add more friends or add more this or add more that, life will get better!”* Addition equals a better life! Adding equals better!

Now, letting go is tough, because letting go is about subtracting. No one ever thinks, *“My life will get better if I just subtract a few things!”* No one ever says that! Because, why? Because subtraction means less. Subtraction means losing. Subtraction means something is being taken away from me. Subtraction equals depleting.

So can you see why it’s a little tough for us to let go? But here, invite this question in: *“Does this spark my joy?”* And suddenly, it’s not a white-knuckling let go. It’s a, *“Hey; is this really right for me? Is this really going to give me greater joy?”* And if it doesn’t, we just thank it and release it. We don’t have to feel guilty; we don’t have to feel bad. The question invites us: *“If this doesn’t bring me joy, why not release it and let it go? Why not free ourselves from it?”*

And this is about clothes; and it’s about a lot more than just clothes. This idea of, *“Does it spark my joy?”* And if it doesn’t, we need to thank it, and then release it. It is a powerful and important thing for us to learn how to let go.

Have you heard of the “Marie Kondo Effect”? You know, she’s got a Netflix series. Anybody see any of her Netflix stuff? Do you know immediately after, Goodwill Industries reported the donations increased by 32% in Washington?

**[Congregation laughs]**

Twenty-two percent in Houston. Twenty percent in Roanoke. And sixteen percent in Grand Rapids. So people are starting to get, *“Hey! This letting go might be a good thing!”*

The average person discards 20 to 30 45-litre bags of stuff! And she did a client that gave up 200 45-litre bags. So letting go is important! It liberates. It lightens. It brings peace, space and clarity to us.

Several years ago they did a study on centenarians: people who lived to be at least 100 years old. And they said, *“Besides genetics, what are things that have allowed you to live this long?”* And they were pretty happy people, so, *“What really contributed to you being happy and a hundred?”* And they said number one was attitude: having a good, positive attitude. Number two was socially connected: they had friends and people around. The other one was goals: something to look forward to. And the fourth one? Was their ability to let go. Their ability to release and move on and come to terms and grieve so they could continue on. You can imagine a hundred years; there’s a lot of stuff that can build up in us, and needs a lot of letting go.

And the fact is: if we want to make progress – if we want to have peace; if we want to experience more joy, more freedom and all the good things we want – letting go, and learning how to let go, is a powerful, important thing. And this one line – *“Does this spark my joy?”* – is a question that can help ease that process of releasing and letting go.

So what do you need to let go? What isn't sparking your joy that you're still holding on to? That you need to now just thank it, and release it?

Second thing about this wonderful, magical line – *“Does this spark my joy?”* – is that every time we say, *“Yes,”* we are surrounding ourselves with good things that bring us joy! Could you imagine if your whole life, you were surrounded by stuff that didn't bring you joy? And could you go to the opposite of seeing everything in your home and your life surrounding you with joy? Things that make you smile? Your clothes, your books, all your stuff? That you feel supported and nurtured and cared for and safe and warm in your own home? To make that bold choice – *“Does this spark my joy?”* – ensures that you surround yourself with energy that's loving, that's supportive, that's caring. And it not only creates that energy around you by saying and following this question, but it also creates space and an attracting energy that she says will bring something unrelated and magnificent into your life.

Here are some of the things that people said after taking her course:

*“After your course, I quit my job and launched into my own business... something that I'd dreamed of doing ever since I was a child.”*

This is another one that says, *“Your course taught me to see what I really needed, and what I didn't need. So I got a divorce, and am a lot happier now.”*

**[Congregation laughs]**

I'm just reading what she wrote!

*“I was finally able to shed the weight that I've been spending years struggling letting go.”*

*“Someone that I've been wanting to see – that I haven't been in touch with – recently got in touch with me.”*

*“I am delighted to report that, since cleaning my apartment, I have been able to really increase my income through more sales.”*

*“My husband and I are now getting along better than ever.”*

She's talking about something spiritual here. She says when you make a dramatic change in releasing this stuff in the physical, a corresponding dramatic change will be transformed in other areas of your life! That when we release all this stuff, we're releasing energy: things that were cluttering and congesting our lives! And when we free ourselves, guess what? It opens the track to a path in what? Things that bring us joy! Things that spark our joy!

Because in life, you're either contracting or expanding. You're attracting or repelling. It's the Law of Attraction! It is the Law of Attraction! When you raise your vibration by choosing and being aware of all the things that bring you joy – and only allow those in your life – something magnificent and amazing and transformative will happen in your life.

The last thing about this magical question – *“Does this spark my joy?”* – is that it begins to give us confidence and connects us in a way that we wouldn't realize. When you think about it, there are

hundreds of items in our homes. So, for hundreds of times, we have to hold something and say, *“Does this spark my joy?”* Well, you do that three, four hundred times, guess what? It will hone your skills in tuning in on what it is you really want. Tuning in on what it is that really brings you joy. And that gives you a level of confidence in all areas after constantly making decisions and having clarity. Because most of us don't always know what we want.

Most of us are sometimes disconnected from what it is we really want. We spend our lives so much trying to please people, trying to have people's approval, or trying to get them to validate us, or to like us, that we act in ways that aren't always us! And sometimes we do it so much, we don't even know what we want! We don't even know what we like! And we don't even give ourselves permission to like what we like! But you ask that question – *“Does this spark my joy?”* – three, four, five hundred times, you will get more connected. You will feel more and more confident.

I watched an episode of her show on Netflix, and it was about a lady who lost her husband of 40 years. It rocked her world. Forty years! And so this whole question of, *“Does this bring me joy?”* really helped her heal and transform. So she said, *“Let's start with your stuff, and we'll get with your husband's stuff after.”* And then she realized, *“Wow; I'm so accustomed to making collaborative decisions, it's hard for me to really realize what brings me joy.”* And so he used to make a lot of decisions and other stuff, and so it was hard, and she was struggling with this. But over time – in this new context, suddenly, of grieving her husband and moving on – her having to ask herself the question over and over again, *“Does this spark my joy?”* – actually began to have her connect with herself again. Helped her, in this new context, rediscover and reinvent who she was, get clear about what she wanted, and really connect with her heart's desires. And over the one-month period – when it says “all at once,” it doesn't mean one day, it just means consecutively until you're done... Marie Kondo went to her house very day. And you could see this lady transform to the point she started owning herself: owning her talent, her beauty, her goals and her dreams. And it was cool!

So this question – *“Does this spark my joy?”* – not only gives us confidence and connection, but it can really help us even heal and remember who we are.

Sometimes we forget our beauty. Sometimes we forget our talent and our greatness. And I love this! *“Does this spark my joy?”* helps us reconnect with all of the goodness and magnificence of us, and helps us bring it out in greater ways. It is a powerful, transformative line: *“Does this spark my joy?”* We begin to trust our inner voice; trust our intuition; trust ourselves; and trust the greatness that's in us that we have not fully allowed ourselves to express. Or talents, abilities, our dreams that are still in there! But asking this question begins to help us pull it out, recognize it, acknowledge it, and begin to live it.

This is a simple question, but it is life-changing and transformative. Because it goes from the physical to the mental, to the emotional, and to the spiritual. And it gets us to know who we really are.

You know, tidying up isn't about mastering your “stuff.” It's about mastering yourself! It isn't about connecting with your things; it's about connecting with yourself and your soul, and your true purpose for being here.

*“Does it spark my joy?”* helps us let go. *“Does it spark my joy?”* attracts and keeps things around us that bring us joy. And it also brings confidence and connection with the truth of who we are.

This one simple question – *“Does this spark my joy?”* – truly, I believe, is THE magic in tidying up!

God bless you all!

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