

♪ Deck the halls with boughs of holly ♪ ♪ Fa la la la la la la la la la ♪ ♪ Tis the season to be jolley ♪ ♪ Fa la la la la la la la la ♪

- Come on! ♪ Fa la la la la la la la la ♪ ♪ Sing the ancient Christmas carol ♪ ♪ Fa la la la la la la la la ♪

- Hey, I just want to tell you guys I'm kind of in the mood to preach today. And I'm hoping you're kind of in the mood to help me and so I gotta warn you up front that this message could like a little bit step on your toes. If you can handle it just say I can handle it.

- [Audience] I can handle it.

- Now just remember you asked for it, okay. We're launching into a new message series called Travel Light. What I hope to do over the next few weeks is remind you and remind myself that this world is not our home. As I travel through my life it's amazing how much of the wrong kind of stuff I end up accumulating. I accumulate hurts and I accumulate junk and I accumulate seeds of, of discontentment that grow into all sorts of problems, and so over the next few weeks what we're going to do is we're gonna talk about letting go of some of the stuff that holds us down, weighs us down, holds us back and so that we can really live the life that would be honoring to God. Next week we're going to talk about letting go of distractions, we're gonna talk about letting go bitterness, we're gonna talk about letting go of control, which some of you probably want to skip that week because you are, you have the spiritual gift of control freak all over you. And your husband just said Amen. And so today what I want to do is I want to talk about letting go of stuff the stuff that weighs us down, I've got a key thought for you if you're taking notes then it's this, it's better to have less of what doesn't matter and more of what does matter. Let's say this allowed. It's better to have what? It's better to have less of what doesn't matter and more of what does. The problem is everything in our culture screams the opposite. You can go all the way back to the beginning of the Bible the story of God creating Adam, said it's good, but it's not that good because Adam lost his keys and has a hard time and so he creates woman to help mate so they can serve together and they're both naked and God says be fruitful, be multiply, enjoy everything in this garden what could get better than that, you know, and you just can't eat from this one tree and the serpent comes along and says something like, that's how I imagined the serpent introducing the conversation. Did God really say you can't eat the fruit of that tree? All the way back the very first creation story you see the very same why imply that so many of us tend to believe today and that is what you don't have. You have all these other blessings from God but what you don't have is what you need to be happy, fulfilled, and complete, and I grew up believing this, that something else out there is what I need, more is always better, more is always better. If one dollar is good, two dollars is better. If one vacation is good two vacations is better. If one car is good, two cars is better. If one kid is good, six is more than enough in our family, and I learned the beginning of this lesson that more is not always better years ago when I went to a movie and I bought not one role of Sprees, who knows what a Spree is? The candy. Not one role of Sprees, but two roles of Sprees because I wrongly believed that if one role of Spree is good two is always better. Well I ate my way through the first role of Sprees. I was probably a good 65 or 70% through the second role of Sprees when my body rejected, violently rejected, the Spree party that I was enjoying, and I vomited the most colorful stream of internal juices that you talk about a

technicolor yawn. I put down on the floor of the Ardmore, AMC or whatever it was the time, the most colorful array of disgust in the history of mankind. And I learned the principle that I want to teach you today. Solomon actually said this, he said that better, everybody say better.

- [Audience] Better. He said better is what? He said better is one handful with tranquility, with peace, with joy, better is one handful with tranquility, then two handfuls with toil, and a chasing after the wind. In other words, it's better to have less of what doesn't matter and more of what really does matter, why? Because your life is too valuable. Your calling too great, and your God too good to waste your life on stuff that does not last. Jesus warned us about this. In fact, there's a powerful story about two sons that we're kind of excited about their inheritance. And Jesus warns them and Luke 12 verse 15, he says, watch out, everybody say watch out.

- [Audience] Watch out.

- He says, be on your guard. Everybody say be on your guard.

- [Audience] Be on your guard.

- The intensity of this warning kind of gives me a pause. It's like something's going to get you something must be really dangerous, there must be something lurking around the corner that could cost me a lot. And the reality is, although I might think of physical danger when someone says watch out and be on your guard, Jesus is showing something that is equally as dangerous to our soul and he says watch out. Be on your guard against all kinds of greed. Because life does not consist in an abundance of possessions. Somebody say my life.

- [Audience] My life.

- Say my life.

- [Audience] My life.

- Does not consist.

- [Audience] Does not consist.

- Of my stuff.

- [Audience] Of my stuff.

- Everything in culture tells you the opposite, but I hope you'll understand you are not what you have. You are not what you drive, you are not what you wear, you are not what you own. Even though you're being incredibly quiet right now. And you act like I'm getting all up in your business. You are not the stuff that you have. The lie is what you don't have is what you need to be happy, fulfilled, joyful, cool, to fit in, to feel good about yourself, to be significant, to be important, to be popular, to have a house like Joanna Gaines, whatever it is, what you don't have is what you need the lie says, to be happy, to be fulfilled, to be complete, more, more, more, more stuff. I would ask you the question what if the stuff you have is actually robbing you from the life that you want.

Better as one handful with tranquility than two with toil and stress and anxiety, it's chasing after the wind. So what I'm going to do today is kind of the perfect time of the year when you're about to buy a bunch of junk give it to your kids and they ignore what was inside the box and they play in the box, right? I want to I want to give you three thoughts about what I call one handful living. One handful living. Are you're ready? Say I'm ready.

- [Audience] I'm ready.

- First thing I want to encourage you to do is cause better is one handful, is to throw out. When you're looking at the junk that most of us have. It is ridiculous, ridiculous, ridiculous. Throw out as if your life depends on it. Because for some people, it really really does. Your life does not consist in the abundance of the junk that you have in your drawer in your closet, up in your attic, in your garage that is overflowing that you can't even park your car in the garage. It's not your life. It's not your life, it's a lie. Eat less of what doesn't matter, more of what does. I'm not talking about just decluttering. I'm talking about de-owning, Getting rid of stuff. I would argue all day long that owning less is way better than organizing more. Your life doesn't consist your stuff. And there was a guy in the New Testament that in many ways for so much of my life I could relate to. He was he was known as the rich young ruler. He was young, he was an up and coming kind of leader. He had a lot of stuff and this problem is with him is the stuff had him. Jesus said something to him that Jesus didn't say to anybody else because he knew the problem this guy had with this stuff Jesus said was you need to do when the guy was asked about, you know, spiritual life, how do I get right with you and such, Jesus said, you need to go sell your stuff, take that money give it to the poor, and he said, then you will have treasures in Heaven. In other words, you'll have less of the stuff that doesn't matter. And you'll have more of what really does matter. And the problem was this guy was so into his stuff that Scripture says when the young men heard this he went away sad because he had great wealth. I want to land on the story for a minute and talk about it because not wrong have stuff, not wrong to have nice stuff. God is the generous God, God blesses us wrong when your stuff has you. It's wrong when your life is defined by your stuff. It's wrong when you believe that more stuff is actually what you need to be fulfilled to be happy in life, pursuing a bunch of junk, believing that there is something meaningful, something powerful, something's gonna fill a void inside of you that no stuff can ever fill. It's a spiritual void. It needs to be filled by the goodness of God and His grace. Why is it, let's just talk about it for a minute, why is it that we hold on to so much stuff? Why won't we give it away? Why can't we throw it out? Two big reasons why we don't throw in our knickknacks. Why we have so many dishes, why you still keep VHS tapes. Why you still have those pants that haven't been worn since MC Hammer wore them. They may come back in style. Alright there's two reasons. One is fear. We're afraid we might need this in the future. How many of you are living with somebody like that right now, just don't point at them, just acknowledge it with a raised hand, and your children might want it. You don't want to be a waste, you want to be a good steward. This is how I grew up, I grew up with a real poverty mindset, I need to save it, I might need it, decided I paid good money for it I don't want to give that away. This is important to me. What I found is there was a tremendous lack of faith. And now I am incredibly passionate about blessing other people with stuff that we don't need. And it's symbolic of a deeper spiritual sense of faith. It's very real in my life. And that is when I give this stuff away that I might need in the future. I'm trusting God to provide for me in the future. And I'm blessing someone else today. God, I'm trusting you to be my provider. I'll show you an example of how passionate I am about this. How many of you

would probably assume that because I speak in public a lot in a lot of different environments, that I probably need more clothes than the average person? How many would say this, probably true? Probably true? Okay, let me show you show you my closets. This is my closet at my office on the right and the other one is my closet at home on the left. That is the sum total of the clothes that I have, with the exception of workout clothes. It does not include my shoes. And those are my clothes. You can take the picture down now because people are starting to judge my clothing. Okay, the reason I have clothes at the office just in case you're wondering is because I have someone that dresses me because I'm colorblind, and it's much better for everyone if someone else dresses me okay. How do I make it without amount of clothes? I have a very strict rule and that is when I get something I give something away every single time. Get a new shirt, give a shirt, get a sweater, give a sweater, get a pair of shoes, give a pair of shoes, and what this does is it keeps what I have for what I do lean, in all fits, it all works, I like it all, I wear it all, if something goes more than a year without being worn it's gone and given away and what this does is it actually frees me up from pressure of this, this, this, managing and such, and this is really how I try to live my life. What if I need it in the future? Well God I trust him to provide. Why do we not often give? Because of fear. Another reason we don't tend to give away or throwaway is cause of sentiment. In other words, you know, this was my first ribbon that I won when I was four years old. Or this is my child's first drawing that she made, you know, in second grade. And here's the first one in third grade. Here's a 17th one in the fifth grade. Here's the report card. And here's the first diaper that my baby did the duty in, you know, whatever it is and so we tend to keep because of sentiment. There's a book that I read among many different books on minimalism and such, this book was by Marie Kondo called The Life Changing Magic of Tidying Up, it's a very odd, strange book, which I like. If I read a book that's close to my philosophy or doesn't change me, if I read a book with one degree away from my philosophy it doesn't change much, if I read one that's way, way different from the way I think it can rattle me off center. That's what this book did. And that's why I like it, why I recommend it. Because it's weird enough to jar me out of where I am. What the author says about sentimental things, is she says to thank them for the purpose they served in the past and bless someone else with it. Thank you, God for that duty that was in that diaper 27 years ago when my baby first pushed that stuff out of her little body into that tiny diaper, it served his purpose in my life. And now I'm going to bless the garbage man with this treasure and move on with life. Thank you, God for the gift that my college roommate painted for me years ago, it served a very valuable purpose and showed me the love and relationship we have. I treasure that my heart and now I bless someone else with this gift. And I'm not going to let the stuff weigh me down. What I want is I want less of the stuff that doesn't matter. So I can have more of what really does. Let's all say it together. Better is what, better is what? Better is one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with a toil and chasing after the wind. The first thing we're gonna do is we're gonna throw out. Somebody say throw out.

- [Audience] Throw out.

- Notice I didn't say throw up, I said throw out. The second thing we're gonna do is we're going to buy less. Buy less. Some of you gonna say too late Pastor Craig, Black Friday and Cyber Monday just came and I just failed for the glory of God in every single way. 62% of people actually admit to, to shopping to cheer themselves up. I feel down I feel depressed so guess what, I'm going to go shopping and get more financial struggles, because that's gonna make me feel so much better. It's a form of entertainment. I want something new. I want something clean. When I go shopping it

makes me feel powerful. It gives me a sense of momentary significance to buy something I don't need with money I don't have to impress people that I don't even like, there's something about that gives me a dopamine temporary high, oh, glory to God. Because when I don't have, that thing out there, it's what I need to feel fulfilled, complete and satisfied. I love what the Solomon says in Psalm 119, verses 36 and 37 prayer, God calls my heart to bow before your words of wisdom, and not to the wealth of this world. I need to pray this all the time. Help me turn my eyes away from illusions, so that I may pursue only that which is true. Help me turn my eyes, another version says away from meaningless things. What I want to do is I want to get to the place and I'm not there now, but I want to get to a place where my life is so full of the goodness of God, that I don't need things to help me feel better about myself. I don't need things to define who I am. Because Jesus has defined who I am. And in our home, one of the things we're really working on and doing better than in years past is we're working hard to choose experiences over things, experiences over things, experiences over things. I want my children to enjoy, have great memories of experiences over things. In fact, just to kind of even see what they would say. I texted my two oldest daughters, Katie and Mandy, both of whom are married this week and I asked them what are your favorite childhood memories? You know what they didn't say? That time you got us a video game, right? The time I finally got my new LuLu leggings or whatever it was. They did not say that, and I want to tell you what they said because it really made me emotional. They said this. Mandy said when we played g-ball, that was our Groeschel version of kickball, much better than kickball is g-ball, you see. When we play the escape game. I did this with all of my kids where I locked them up and hold them and they have to escape by a certain number if not they get tickled and so ready go. And they fight and they fight and they fight and we play the escape game. Mandy also said the obstacle courses. We'd go to the playground and you'd have to go over and under, ready, get set go. We'd time them and such. Katie said it was the first of the year look backs whenever the new year starts we'd look back over the previous year and we write down all of the memories of here's when you got your training wheels off and here's when you lost your first tooth and such. She said Nancy Drew books because I read all of them to my kids, all of them. There's 793,000 Nancy Drew books, There's 793,000 Nancy Drew books, if you look it up, and we read all of them. And then she said the dog fairy stories, which I hate, I don't want to go into details. But it is a true verifiable fact that since I was a child there's actually a dog fairy that lives under our house. He follows us from house to house. At nighttime, a magical door opens under a bed, the dog fairy comes out and does all sorts of wild adventures in the house. Some of you will not believe it. But I tell you, God is my witness. There's a dog fairy, that lives in our house, and I'm sticking to that story as long as I live. Throw out that stuff, don't be weighed down by the stuff. On the other side of that stuff there's freedom and there's joy, and there's time for relationships. I'm gonna buy less. We're into experiences, memories, time with the people that we love, not stuff that will burn up. And then finally, to have the life that really matters, one hand living I'm going to talk about giving more, give more. Give more. I love what Paul told Timothy, in First Timothy 6:17, to me this is so powerful and emotional to me what he said Paul to Timothy, he said, command those who are rich in this present world. Let me stop there for a moment. Because whenever we read a verse about rich people, I know what most of you do, most all of you gonna say, well, I know some rich people but I'm not a rich people. I work with a rich person but I'm not a rich person. I've got a friend at college and her parents pay for everything, they're rich people, but I have a job, I'm not a rich people. Let me just put it in global perspective for a moment. If you drove somewhere today, you are rich people, you're in somewhere between the top five to 7% richest people on planet Earth. If you have three meals a

day, or at least the option to have those you're a rich people. You're in the top 40% of people alive today. If you're able to order a pizza on your phone, you're a crazy rich people. We're rich people. When we look at the totality of the population of the world today, we're incredibly blessed. This verse is to us. Hear it, feel it, internalize it, embrace it, live it, become it. Command those who are rich, this is us in this present world, not to be arrogant, nor to put their hope in wealth which is so uncertain but where are we to put our hope? We're to put our hope in God. Who does what? Who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. We don't feel guilty about our blessings. God is a God who blesses. We don't feel guilty if we have nice stuff, we just don't let the stuff have us. Then he tells them command those rich people, notice what he doesn't say, command them to buy more! Command them to hoard it all until they don't have room in their nice house and they have to buy extra storage space just to put their stuff. He doesn't command them to click Buy Now on Amazon, over and over and over again. But this is what he says. Command those rich people to do good, to be rich in good deeds, to be generous, and willing to share, in this way they will lay up treasures for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age. So they may take hold of the life that is truly life. Your life does not consist in the abundance of stuff. But when you're a blessing. When you choose experiences, when you overflow, the goodness of God and you're generous. That is the life that is truly life. Less of what doesn't matter, more of what does. In fact, when I think about stuff, I never get emotional like oh my gosh, I just, I got that expensive high end bed. Oh, it makes me so emotional. I don't have a single emotional getting story. Oh, when I finally got my my iPhone 10. Oh god, I feel so close to you. When I finally got the off white shoes. Well I don't have those, but if I did, oh, now. I just have to cry for well. I don't have emotional getting stories. Finally made the purchase, 54 inch TV. I also don't have emotional keeping stories. Oh, it's so meaningful. I was just about to give an end of your sacrificial offering to help you eradicate Bible poverty. But I am so glad I didn't. Instead I took the whole family out to Chili's. I'm so glad. We got an extra refrigerator, a new one. And I was going to give the old one to this great single mom for my life group who is a need and doesn't have one. But oh, thank God in heaven I kept out in the garage. We don't even remember it's there but it's out there just in case. I don't have an emotional story. Like that. But I've got too many emotional giving stories to count. It goes back to my first time when I was scared to death. Because I was raised with the you better have more, more, more, more and giving God 10% seemed irrational. And I remember being totally convicted to do it. And scared, and I wrote a check. If you don't know what a check is you can Google it along with a VHS tape for those of you that are under 25 years of age. And my hand was like shaking. And I put it in an offering bucket. And I felt so close to God. Faith. And he proved himself faithful to me. I remember when we when we started Life.Church, and amen, I felt called by God to do what we call going all in we took everything that wasn't tied down, like that means our house, every cent that we could liquidate everything we had. And we gave the first offering to the church. It was the biggest offering to us, wasn't big compared to what we can do now. But at the age of 28 we went all in. And two years later, we did it again. And I remember that with joy and great emotion. I remember when I wrote my first book, 15 books. My first book and we had six little kids, and we're looking at braces and had college coming and weddings cause I got four daughters. And I thought this has been a great way to pay all this stuff. And we felt called by God to give the royalties from that first book, I wrestled with it, we wrestled with it, and wrestled with it, I said God called us to do this. I feel great emotion for that. I remember when people wanted to buy our church resources. And we said, what if we gave them away? I remember the fear of could we keep doing it? Would it matter, would they care? And how now years later, churches around the world are blessed by

that decision. I remember when we gave our first car to someone in need. It wasn't an expensive car. But it was a lot to us then. Things that are a member of value that this age in life, it's not stuff. So funny, in the early years of life all I wanted to do is accumulate more, more, more, more, more and more, at this age I can look at it and say that stuff's gonna burn up and doesn't matter. Better, somebody say better.

- [Audience] Better.

- Say it again, say better.

- [Audience] Better.

- Better is one handful with tranquility, with contentment, with peace, with joy, with simplicity, with margin, with assurance, with confidence, with the ability to be generous, with the heart to be a blessing, than two handfuls with toil, more, more, more, stuff, with toil, more, more, more, stuff, stuff, stuff, stuff, stuff. The chasing after the wind. Less of what doesn't matter, more of what does. Less of what doesn't matter, more of what does. This world is not our home we're passing through. I asked myself this question all the time. Are you accumulating on Earth what you cannot keep? Or are you investing in Heaven, what you cannot lose? Traveling light, Travel light, throw out, buy less, give more, less of what doesn't matter, more of what does, less of the stuff that just cost more stuff. Less of the stuff that just accumulates and gets in the way of what matters, more intimacy, more peace, more joy, more deep and committed relationships, more generosity, more blessings that are truly blessings, less of the imitations less of the distractions, more of the life that is truly life because listen to me, your calling is too great. Your life is too valuable. Your God is too good to waste this one life on things that do not last. Why is one handful living better? Think about it. When you've got one handful, what can you do if someone's down? You can help them up. What do you do if you have one handful? You can give to someone who's in need. If someone who is hurting, you can encourage them, cheer them up, give them a hug, pat them on the bottom, flat never cupped. Unless you're married then cup it all you want. You can give praise to God. Because your life is not so full of the stuff that holds you back. Let's say it together. Better is one handful.

- [Audience] Better is one handful.

- With tranquility.

- [Audience] With tranquility.

- Than two.

- [Audience] Than two.

- With toil.

- [Audience] With toil.

- And a chasing after the wind.

- [Audience] And a chasing after the wind.

- Less of what doesn't matter.
- [Audience] Less of what doesn't matter.
- More of what does.
- [Audience] More of what does.

- So Father, we ask today that by your power, and I pray this for me, God, that you would help us let go of the stuff that weighs us down and holds us back. Not to feel guilty for the way you blessed us. We know you're a generous God, but not to let the stuff own us, to define us. And help us not to believe the lie that there's something out there that we don't have, that's what we need, unless the thing that we don't have, God, is you, because that's what we truly need. All of our churches today if you'd like to pray with me, God help me to not be defined by the things of this world, not to crave the things of this world. But God to truly have less of what doesn't matter and have more of what does. If you want to pray that with me would you lift up your hands right now, just all of our churches. God thank you for people that want to be Kingdom minded. Want to be a blessing in this world, want to be generous, want to be free from the lies that what we don't have is what we need to be happy, fulfilled, and complete. I pray God that you would give us a sense of gratitude, never entitlement, gratitude for all the blessings that we have, not guilt but gratitude. God I pray that you give us a sense of stewardship to recognize that most of us, we have far more than we'd ever need and that we could truly be a blessing to others. God, I pray that there are those today that would even love was an irrational act of generosity. Someone who may give the very first offering ever, and someone who give their very first tide ever, someone who take that second refrigerator and bless somebody with it, someone who will bless someone in their life group with a car, someone who has the ability, who will say, hey, I have this and it would be my great honor to bless you with it. Help us God, help us God, help us God, to have less of what does not matter. And more of what does. As you keep praying today at all of our different churches, some of you, you're going to recognize very clearly, this is you. You're going through life pursuing that something. That something to satisfy, that something that you're missing, you tried everything and you can continue to try, go to the party scene, try to get more likes, become more popular, have more fun, travel more places, go to more exotic places, get more things, get better name brands, upgrade your house, get a bigger house, get nicer stuff in your house, try a different person, another person, another person, and then burn through relationships. And you can try everything of this world and you're still gonna come up short, why? Because you were not created for this world. You are not created to be satisfied and blessed and fulfilled by the things of this world. This world is not your home. The problem is so many of us is we're trying to fill a spiritual void with material things. Our need is not for more physical, our need is for spiritual peace through Jesus. The grace of Jesus Christ. Why is it that we want so much of this world? The reason is because we are bent toward sin. We're all sinners, every single one of us, we do things wrong. We know what we feel guilty, we feel unqualified for having God if I stood before you I know I've done a lot of bad things, I don't know what to do about it. Let me tell you what, there's nothing you can do about it. God did everything about it. He sent his son Jesus who is perfect, sinless in every way, Jesus became for us sin on the cross, he died in our place. On the third day God raised Him from the dead, what did God do? Got defeated death, Hell, sin and the grave. Now we have access to all the eternal spiritual blessings of God through Jesus Christ,

not by our own effort, not by our own goodness, but only by the grace of God. How are we made right with God is never by our own good works, is never by the lack of our own sinfulness, it's only by the grace of Jesus. So when you call on his name, the name that is above every name, the name of Jesus, God hears your prayers, He will forgive your sins, they're covered by the blood of Jesus, your sins covered and what do you become? New, forgiven, completely made whole by the grace of Jesus at all of our churches there are those of you, you recognize, you've been looking, you've been searching, you can't find it. The reason that you've been looking and you've been searching in the wrong places. Today is the day where you turn from your sins, you call on the name of Jesus. He will forgive your sins. He will give you the life that is truly life, all of our churches those who say yes, I want less of what doesn't matter, more of what does, I turn from my sins, I give my life to Jesus, that's your prayer lift your hands high now. All over the place to say yes, that's my prayer, back here in the section, God bless you, right back over here over, over here as well. Up here in this section. Oh my gosh, goodness, over here, others of you, way back here toward the back, Jesus I call on you, here in the middle section, Jesus I need you, right back over here. Church Online, you click right below me and we're all going to pray together then we're going to worship God for His goodness. Would you pray aloud? Pray Heavenly Father.

- [Audience] Heavenly Father.
- I give you my life.
- [Audience] I give you my life.
- Jesus save me.
- [Audience] Jesus save me.
- Forgive all my sins.
- [Audience] Forgive all my sins.
- Fill that void.
- [Audience] Fill that void.
- With your spirit.
- [Audience] With your spirit.
- So I can follow you.
- [Audience] So I can Follow You.
- So I can love you.
- [Audience] So I can love you.
- So I can serve you.

- [Audience] So I can serve you.
- Help me to have.
- [Audience] Help me to have.
- Less of what doesn't matter.
- [Audience] Less of what doesn't matter.
- And more of what does.
- [Audience] And more of what does.
- More of you.
- [Audience] More of you.
- More of the life.
- [Audience] More of the life.
- That is truly life.
- [Audience] That is truly life.
- Today I give you my life.
- [Audience] Today I give you my life.
- Thank you for new life. In Jesus name I pray. Could somebody worship God in a big way? Could somebody welcome this morning to God's family today?