

MAKING YOUR HOME A

# Paradise

10 DAYS TO GETTING THE  
RESULTS YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED



*Davonne Parks*

**Making Your Home a Haven:**

**10 Days to Getting the Results  
You've Always Wanted**

*by Davonne Parks*

## Copyright Information

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Editor: Lisa Grimenstein

Published by: Nathan and Davonne Parks at [High Performance Computer Services](#)

Cover Design: Anna Bean

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First Edition: January 2017

## Table of Contents

Welcome: Get Ready to Love Your Home

Day 1: Discover Your Why

Day 2: Find Your Mission Field (It's Closer than You Think)

Day 3: Be Happy You're Not the Best

Day 4: Embrace Imperfect Timing

Day 5: Think About the Future

Day 6: Offer Yourself Grace

Day 7: Bring Your Basket

Day 8: Set a Stuff Budget

Day 9: Live in Gratitude

Day 10: Choose the Harder Thing

Further Encouragement: When You Wish Someone Would Hold Your Hand While You Clean

*About the Author*

*Connect with the Author*

## Welcome! Get Ready to Love Your Home!

I'm so glad you're here!

The simple fact that you're reading this means you might be wondering if there is hope for your home. Perhaps you feel uncertain about whether the tips in this email course will actually help you.

Let me assure you, there is hope and the tips will help.

I know this because I used to be a Horrible Housekeeper (read a little about that [here](#)), and the tips I'm going to share with you are the same processes that help me transform my own home and habits.

I'm sharing these processes with you because I believe you can do it—I know that whether your home simply needs a little extra freshening or you're living in an absolute disaster zone, if you complete these daily challenges, you will be well on your way to making your home a haven for your family.

### **Supplies Needed:**

Housekeeping doesn't have to be expensive! A few basic items will help you whip your home into shape. You'll need:

- Trash bags or boxes
- Laundry detergent
- Multi-purpose cleaning wipes or your favorite cleaning supplies
- Zip-top bags and a permanent marker (optional: to help you quickly group & label like items as you clean)
- Notebook and pen
- A can-do attitude! It will never be the perfect time to clean, things will come up, and people will make messes. But a positive attitude will go a long way in helping you to continue making progress in your home.

**Today's Tasks:** Today, gather your supplies and mentally gear yourself up for the *Making Your Home a Haven* challenge! Read and complete one section of this eBook per day, for the next 10 days, for encouragement and cleaning assignments.



In the meantime, if you'd like online accountability and motivation as you freshen your home, join the [FREE Tidy Up Club on Facebook](#), where you can share ideas, progress, encouragement, and even setbacks with other women throughout this challenge.

Another idea is to grab a real-life friend and [do the challenge together](#). Texting, calling, emailing, or taking turns cleaning each other's house is a great way to stay motivated and accountable while deepening your friendship.

After you've gathered your supplies (and grabbed a friend), I'd love to hear from you—drop me a note to let me know you're joining in! Simply email me at

[Davonne@DavonneParks.com](mailto:Davonne@DavonneParks.com) or introduce yourself in the [Tidy Up Club](#). I can't wait to clean with you!

## Day 1: Discover Your Why

**As you prepare to freshen your home,** reflect on why you would like to have an organized space. Do you want a clean home to relax in and enjoy? Are you tired of spending your precious minutes (or hours) digging through clutter piles as you look for lost items? Do you want to host get-togethers more often but are terrified of others seeing your mess?

Whether you wish you could relax guilt-free without being surrounded by a mess or simply long to be able to answer the door without panicking, it's important to know *your* personal *why* so you can stay motivated as you work to create a haven within your own four walls.

### **Here's my *why*:**

*I want to embrace life without reservation and be able to live out God's plan for me. I don't want to be hindered by a messy house or rooms overflowing with clutter. I desire to always welcome others in with open arms, and for my home to feel like a refuge in this sometimes harsh world.*

*I want space more than I want things. I long for home to be a soft place for my family to land after a long day. I hope to embrace adventure and spontaneity, guilt-free, because I know my possessions have already been cared for.*

*Above all, I desire to be thankful and to feel abundantly blessed that I have a home to live in, a family to enjoy it with, dishes to eat from, and clothes to wear.*



**Personal Reflection:** Take a few minutes to think about and write down your own *why* so you can read it later when you're wondering if all this work is really worth the effort (Spoiler Alert: it is!).

If you'd like to share encouragement and inspiration with others, share your *why* in the [private Tidy Up Facebook group](#), or post your *why* anywhere on Social Media using #TidyUpClub.

**Home Assignment:** Whether you have 4 hours or 15 minutes today, you can make a positive difference in your home!

- Tidy the main living areas in your home—I consider “main areas” the spaces you can’t close a door to if someone drops by, such as the living room, kitchen, one bathroom, etc.
- Clean up one bedroom if time allows.

- Work on laundry. If you're pressed for time, just do one load from start to finish. If you have a slower schedule today, take advantage of the opportunity to do several loads.

**Special Tip:** If a room is really bad, clean up the big items and toss the rest into a box or laundry basket; then place the box out of the way in a corner or closet. Perfection is not the goal—today is about getting the house to a manageable level and feeling good about putting your feet up to relax in a tidier home.

**Reward Yourself:** Tonight, light a candle and spend 10 minutes browsing a magazine or reading a chapter in a book.

## Day 2: Find Your Mission Field (It's Closer Than You Think)

It's a dream of mine to one day go on a mission trip. I'll bet you have big dreams for your life too. But sometimes it feels as though cleaning gets in the way of being able to live out our dreams! So today, I want to share a little story about what used to happen nearly every time I did the dishes:

*I stood at the sink, viciously scrubbing cherry colored pans. The bright hue mocked me and I felt bitterness well up within my soul as murky dishwater swirled down the drain.*

There are real problems in this world but I'm stuck here at home instead of doing something that actually matters, *I thought furiously.*

*I scrubbed harder, charred remains of the previous night's dinner finally coming loose, and I vowed that I would someday find time for more important things than just washing sinks full of dirty dishes.*

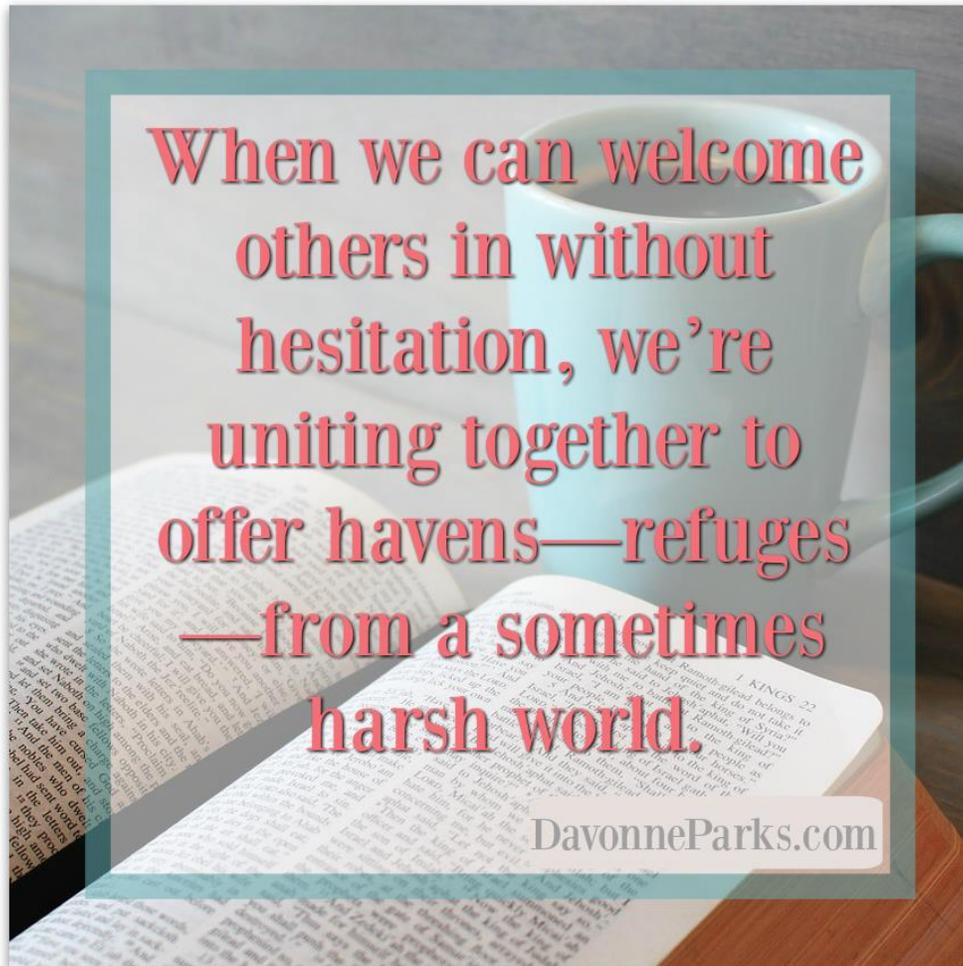
Have you ever felt that way? I know that if I could turn back the clock, I would gently whisper truths to my younger self. I would tell her that cleaning does matter. I'd let her know that **right now, at home, she's in her mission field**. I'd tell her that making a difference in the lives of those around her will have an eternal impact.

Nurturing souls, whether they're in our living rooms or across the world, is no small task. And when we can offer a safe, inviting place for our families to land, or welcome others in without hesitation, we're uniting together to offer havens—refuges—from a sometimes harsh world.

**This difficult, monotonous work of sweeping floors and scrubbing toilets is not in vain.** Creating and maintaining order within our own homes is one of the most important works we'll ever do. Not because a clean house in itself is so important, but because having a clean home opens up our lives for so much more.

*"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house." (Matthew 5:14-15 NKJV)*

Can you see it? When we're not buried under clutter, we can focus on being a light to our communities.



I no longer own the cherry colored pans, but I'll never forget the years I spent scrubbing them as I wrestled within myself, longing for an opportunity to impact lives but feeling trapped within my own four walls. Years of experience have shown me, however, that cleaning is not the end—it's the beginning.

By having a cleaner home, we will feel more ready to embrace unexpected challenges

and to joyfully welcome guests into our homes, because we won't be spending so much of our time or energy feeling embarrassed about our homes as we desperately try to keep clutter piles at bay.

**Personal Reflection:** Consider your own mission field. How would you spend your precious hours if you weren't digging through laundry for clean outfits or rifling through piles of paper in hopes of finding the one item you need?

Share encouragement and inspiration with others by posting in the [private Tidy Up Club on Facebook](#) or start a discussion with your friends and family about how you can make an impact together.

If you have a few extra minutes today, also watch [this incredible video](#) about a man who sang "Amazing Grace" without knowing why he was singing it—until someone gave him a reason. The difference is astounding. When we know our why, it changes everything and that concept is illustrated beautifully in the video.

### **Home Assignment:**

- Tidy the bedrooms.
- Do two loads of laundry from start to finish.
- Clean out a clutter pile in one room. (If you don't know where to start, watch my [short video about when housekeeping feels overwhelming.](#))

**Special Tip:** Make sure the house looks better, not worse, while you're cleaning. If you run out of time or stamina before the job is finished, take five minutes to tidy the area before leaving it. Take trash outside, put items away that need relocated, and place the things you haven't sorted into a corner or closet so they're not in the way until next time.

**Reward Yourself:** Spend 15 minutes doing something you really enjoy, such as writing in a journal, going for a walk, or watching the sun set.

## Day 3: Be Happy You're Not the Best!

Do you ever get discouraged thinking that someone else is a better housekeeper, healthier cook, more fit, or more fun than you?

I'm right there with you! I absolutely *know* there are better writers, more efficient homemakers, and more fun moms than me.

But just because I'm not the best toilet-scrubbing, messy-project loving, writer-mom on the planet doesn't mean I should never clean my bathroom, plan activities for my kids, or continue writing!

I resolved long ago that being less than the world's best wouldn't stop me from doing what I love (or what I need to do), and I hope you won't let that stop you either.

If you're not the best cook in the world, so what! You can still feed your family nourishing meals.

Not the best housekeeper? Me neither! We can still work toward making our homes relaxing havens, even if we have to work harder at it than other housekeepers.

**The reality is, if we wait until we're the best at something before we even start trying, we'll never start at all.**



Today I want to encourage you to stop worrying that you're not the best—in fact, embrace it! You were wonderfully created in the image of the Almighty God who loves you abundantly.

*For You formed my inward parts;  
You covered me in my mother's womb.  
I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
Marvelous are Your works,  
And that my soul knows very well. (Psalm 139:13–14 NKJV)*

**Personal Reflection:** Write down two ways you can embrace your imperfections. Replace self-defeating talk with encouraging words as you work to make progress in your home.

**Home Assignment:**

- Tidy your home—go over any rooms you haven't tidied yet and quickly straighten the ones you have.
- Finish the laundry.
- Set the timer and spend 15 minutes working as fast as you can on something you've been procrastinating on.

**Special Tip:** We're going to start working on more problem areas tomorrow, so make sure to complete today's assignments—having a tidy home is key to setting ourselves up for success with decluttering!

Also, refuse to give in to discouragement or procrastination. There will never be a perfect time and mood to clean, so commit to doing *something* now—no matter how small! If you'd like some extra cleaning motivation, then check out [this article about the top ten ways to make cleaning more fun](#).

**Reward Yourself:** Do something fun with your family. Play a game, have a light-hearted conversation, or go for a walk. If you live alone, call a relative you haven't talked to in a while.

## Day 4: Embrace Imperfect Timing

After dinner one evening, I tiptoed toward my bedroom to sneak away for a few minutes of quiet relaxation. Just before crossing the threshold, I paused and glanced back toward the kitchen. The room was quiet and the lights were dim, but plates and cups remained on the table.

I turned to my bedroom again, my eyes drinking in the site of my warm comforter. *Just a few minutes*, I told myself. *Then I'll be refreshed and ready to clean.*

But I heard a phrase echoing in my mind:

"The bitterness of living in a mess remains long after the sweetness of resting is forgotten." – Sandra Felton, *The Messies Manual*

Hesitating, I pivoted my body back and forth as I glanced from my bedroom to the kitchen and back again.

My heart knew that Ms. Felton was right when she penned those wise words. The inward battle was over. I strode to the kitchen and rolled up my sleeves.

Sometimes I wait for perfect. I wait for the perfect schedule, the perfect timing, the perfect mood, or the perfect weather. I think that I'll clean when my kids are older, or I'm less busy, or I have a week off work, or after I get a better night's sleep. The list could go on forever.

But that night, I made the better choice.

**Because a life lived in waiting isn't a life fully lived at all.** Life isn't about one big choice that magically fixes everything and makes everything perfect. It's about little decisions. Small, right decisions many times a day over the course of many, many weeks, months, years.

Those small choices will turn into large habits. And those habits will greatly impact our lives and productivity.

We can't do everything, but we can do *something*.



**Personal Reflection:** When you know you need to clean, what holds you back from starting? Is it feeling overwhelmed, being too busy, or thinking that you need the time and energy to complete a project perfectly in order to begin?

Grab a piece of paper and list three things that hold you back from cleaning. Then write down several ideas on how you will work to overcome all three of those obstacles.

### **Home Assignment:**

- Quick house tidy. Forget about perfection. Just get things clean enough and move on!
- Do one load of laundry.
- Choose one room you really want to have organized within a week and start cleaning! If your schedule is full, [watch this video for a few helpful tips](#) about how to fit cleaning into a busy schedule.

**Special Tip:** Turn on some upbeat music and silence your phone before you go into the room you want to declutter. Once you're in there, throw things out ruthlessly. Remember, the less there is, the less there is to clean!

If you come across something that feels overwhelming, just set it in a "sort later" pile so it doesn't slow you down. Even if you can only carve out a little bit of time today, you can make a positive difference in your home, so don't let a busy schedule discourage you!

**Reward Yourself:** Go to bed a few minutes early so you can treat yourself to a little extra shut-eye tonight.

## Day 5: Think About the Future

I tenderly touched the items that were buried away in a closet. Tiny outfits, worn-out books, little blankets... they all tugged at my heartstrings.

*"What do you do with the baby items when you think you're done having children but you know you're not immune to little surprises?"* I texted to my friend Kelli, a mother of five.

Her reply came a few moments later: *"Pass the items along. Don't think about what you're giving away—think ahead to the joy of what you're gaining as you make room for new things. **Trust God to provide** if you do have another tiny blessing."*

Softly brushing tears from my cheek, I went back to the closet and started filling donation sacks with baby items. When I finished, I dragged our camping gear—evidence of a new favorite hobby—over to the closet and started filling in the empty spaces.

With each shelf I filled, my heart grew a little lighter and a little happier. Kelli was right. It felt good to pick the newer items up off the floor and put them into a place of real belonging.

Cleaning out the basement closet reminded me that **when we look ahead instead of behind, we're creating space for life to be lived instead of holding on to a time that can never again be more than a memory.**



When we look ahead, we're able to focus more on the feeling of a clean house later rather than just the desire of wanting to rest right now. Looking ahead allows us to think about how we'll feel if someone stops by unexpectedly when the house is clean—and when it isn't.

Thinking ahead causes us to consider how we'll feel when we lay down at night. Will we feel good knowing that we used little minutes to tidy up and wash some laundry, or will we feel guilty knowing we were too distracted with technology to make sure everyone had clean clothes for the next day?

And when morning comes, will we be ready to greet the day in a clean home or will we wake with dread, knowing we're about to face an overwhelming mess?

Sometimes we desperately want a fresh home but feel too busy to clean. When that happens, we consider our schedules. Perhaps we could temporarily lessen our social engagements, cut back on time spent with television or social media, or even re-prioritize service projects.

Even if there's not much we can realistically minimize right now, we can still [choose wisely to make a positive difference in our homes](#).

*"If you really want to do something, you'll find a way. If you don't, you'll find an excuse." – Jim Rohn*

**Personal Reflection:** If you're in a place of chaos, I want to encourage you to make a commitment to yourself that you are going to work in your home. Review what you wrote down on Day 1 about why you want to keep an organized house, and as you're cleaning today, think about how much you want to enjoy your space.

Remember that regardless of whatever else is going on in your life, it's easier to face other challenges when home is a haven.

### **Home Assignment:**

- [Watch this video](#) if you don't feel like cleaning.
- House tidy. Forget about perfection. Just get things clean enough and move on!
- Complete the laundry.
- Create a list of what you want to accomplish in the room you're decluttering this week. Do you just want to see the floor? Are you hoping to clean out all the cabinets, closets, or drawers? Do you have a goal to donate eight bags full of items to your local donation center? List everything you can think of that you want to do, and make a realistic plan for how to accomplish your list.

**Special Tip:** After you finish making your list, eliminate at least two items. Give yourself the gift of doing less!

**Reward Yourself:** Watch a family movie, play a card game, or read a book together so you can enjoy a fun family activity without messing up your fresh, clean house.

## Day 6: Offer Yourself Grace

My body curled into a ball as my face became drenched with tears. Shame and regret washed over me while I cried. Harsh words had been hurled at a loved one, the unlucky recipient who had unjustly borne the brunt of my overflowing stress.

I wished I could take those ugly words away from the hearer's ears and shove them right back into my mouth, then swallow them whole and allow something kind and gentle to flow from my lips instead.

I desperately want to be a life giver. To refresh, uplift, and renew those around me. But sometimes, I fall painfully short of that desire.

In those minutes after my verbal storm, I felt unlovable and unredeemable. I fed myself lies because I didn't feel worthy of truth. And the truth is that, yes, I should have responded in a kinder way, but one bad moment does not define me.

One bad hour does not have to translate to a terrible day.

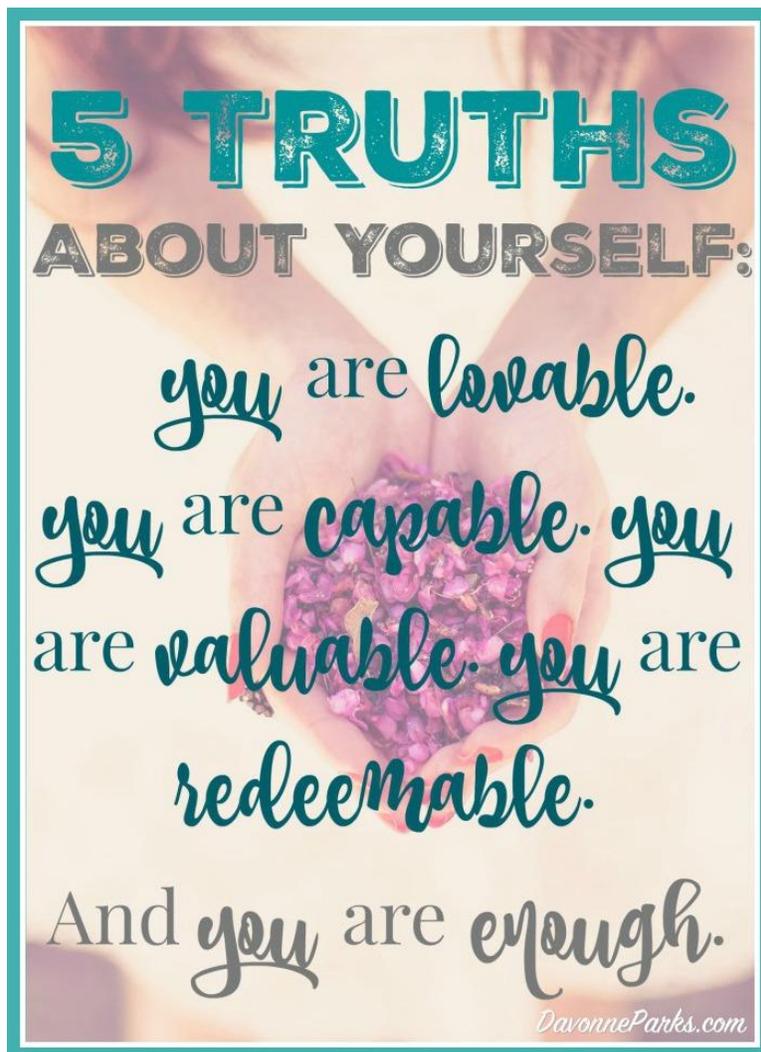
One slew of unkind words, though not excusable, does not take away the thousands of beautiful sentences I've woven into someone's heart.

**Mess-ups, sin, and shortcomings are all redeemable. But to grow, we must repent and offer ourselves grace as we feed our minds with life-giving truths.**

If you're struggling with feelings of defeat, I want you to tell yourself these truths. Say them out loud. Feel the healing that can come from believing these words:

- **I am lovable.** Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
- **I am capable.** Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

- **I am valuable.** 1 Peter 3:3-4 "Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel— rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God."
- **I am redeemable.** Romans 8:37-39 "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
- **I am enough.** Psalm 139:14 "I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And *that* my soul knows very well."



If we want to move forward, if we want to do well in life—whether at parenting, homemaking, a career, or any other desired goal, we must first believe that we can. We have to internalize the knowledge that every inch of us was lovingly created. We must know that we're not beyond help.

Although we shouldn't make excuses for poor habits, it doesn't benefit us to wallow in self-defeating talk, either. We can gently acknowledge where we need to improve. We can offer ourselves grace.

We must believe that we will make a difference. We will change. We will improve. We will learn to be okay with imperfect progress.

**Because when we stop trying to do things in the perfect way at the perfect time, we give ourselves permission to move forward, right where we are, starting today.**

Lasting change won't happen perfectly. It requires time and discipline. And a positive difference isn't always noticeable from the outside until great progress has been made within our own hearts first.

But when we refuse to give up, we will begin making improvements. Yes, it might be two steps forward and one (or three) steps back, but we will keep trying because every positive decision helps to propel us forward.

We refuse to give up so we can mature into the women that God created us to be. We can choose to be refined ([Zechariah 13:8-9](#)).

And it will be beautiful.

**Personal Reflection:** Do you deeply believe this about yourself?: *I am lovable, I am capable, I am valuable, I am redeemable, and I am enough.*

If you don't yet believe those words, write them down or [print them out](#), and put them on your bathroom mirror or stick them in your pocket. Tell yourself the powerful truths over and over again until you believe them. And then keep on telling yourself, so you never forget.

**Home Assignment:**

- House tidy. Do this quickly and move on!
- Laundry. Whether you do one load or do it all, you're still making progress.
- Spend at least 30 to 60 minutes in the room you're organizing this week. Set a timer and move as quickly as you can, throwing things into one of four boxes: toss, donate, keep, and "maybe." Don't bother putting everything away yet—just get things into boxes as quickly as possible in the time you have.

**Special Tip:** Let's focus on blessing—not impressing—any potential guests as we kick perfectionism to the curb and work to make things nice for our families.

**Reward Yourself:** Spend 20 minutes doing something that refreshes you—read a book, call a friend, go for a walk, or anything else that [fills your cup](#).

## Day 7: Bring Your Basket (Plus a Quick Catch-Up Tip)

*The sun slowly lowered, casting a glow on the trees. The crowd stood shoulder-to-shoulder, crammed together as they hung on every word. There was nothing fancy or attractive about the speaker, but the message He offered was enthralling.*

*And then, there were whispers of sending them home. At a late hour, bellies empty. Their spirits deflated.*

### **But, wait!**

*The voice was direct, "You give them something to eat." Did they hear correctly? They held their breath as they strained to hear the response. And there it was again—instruction to gather what was there.*

*Somehow, it was enough. Five loaves of bread and 2 fish filled 5,000 men, plus the women and children. And 12 baskets of food remained!*

*{Scripture References: [Isaiah 53:2–5](#); [Mark 6:34–43](#); [Matthew 14:19–21](#)}*

Friend, I've shared before that Sarah Mackenzie's book [Teaching from Rest](#) has challenged and transformed me in ways that nothing other than the gospel ever has.

One of my biggest takeaways from [Teaching from Rest](#) is the concept of bringing our baskets. In this section Sarah says:

"Just like the disciples, I see this huge throng of people to feed—this seeming impossibility. The shaping of souls and raising of children, the mopping of floors, washing of dishes, bandaging of scraped knees and hearts and worries, the teaching and admonishing and loving and doling out of myself. It's all too much...

"But I have my little basket. I can read aloud pretty well. I'm good at organizing

things on paper. I can make a decent pot of chili and I know how to push a vacuum. I love my children with all of my being... It's just a couple loaves of bread and a few fish.

"Apparently, that's all He needs...

"If you are being asked to feed a multitude with a tiny basket of loaves and fish, then bring your basket. He starts with that. Just like the crowd in the wilderness, which had been faithfully following Jesus for days, sitting at His feet, savoring His words, seeking Him earnestly, we do the same. We bring our basket—whatever talents, skills, abilities we have—and we seek Him with everything we are...

"Surrender everything. Bring your loaves and your fish, even if you think them completely insufficient. They are insufficient. You are insufficient. But His grace is not."

– Sarah Mackenzie, [\*Teaching from Rest\*](#)

Sarah also reminds us that Jesus didn't work with nothing—He had the disciples bring what they had before He performed the miracle. He also desires for us to use our own baskets in loving service to Him.

And before you decide that your own offering is too small, I want to assure you it's not. You have something beautiful to offer to your home and your family.

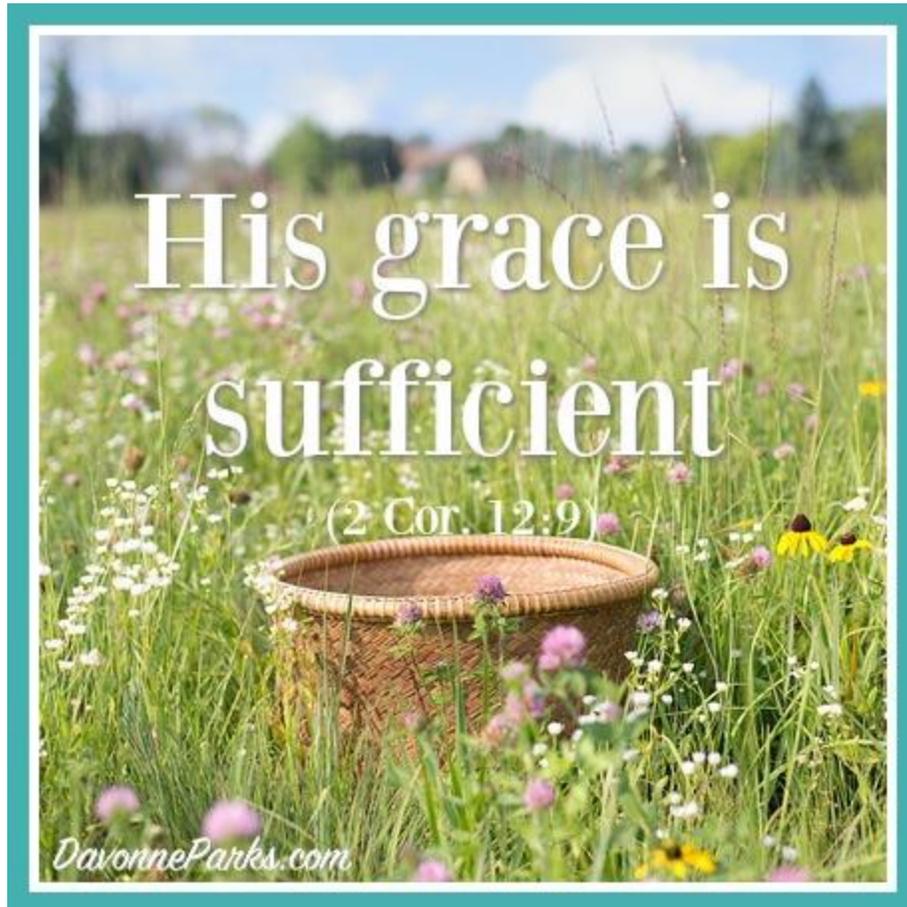
**I'd like to pray for you.**

*Dear Heavenly Father,*

*Thank You for giving each of us unique skills and interests. Please help my friend to see what she can bring before You. Help her to rest in You as she prioritizes her life so she can thrive in the season You've placed her in. Show her what her basket holds and guide her to use her creativity well.*

*In Jesus name I pray, amen.*

While you're scrubbing toilets, washing dishes, or bandaging scraped knees, think about your own basket. *What do you love doing that you're naturally good at? And how can you use your basket to bring life and light into your home?*



**Home Assignment:** Today is a catch-up and rest day!

If you've been working on this challenge and your house is in good shape, then rest today so you can refresh and be ready to dig back in tomorrow.

If you've been reading about the challenges but not completing the tasks, this is your chance to catch up by completing only the Day 6 assignments that you read about yesterday. Don't skip this step—you can still finish strong!

**Special Tip:** It's important to give yourself time to rest and refresh as you're cleaning. So make sure to participate in the "reward yourself" section each day even if you're unable to finish each home assignment.

**Reward Yourself:** Get a little fresh air. Take a walk, ride your bike, go for a run, or push your kids on a swing. Even if it's really cold or hot, you can still enjoy fresh air by bundling up (in winter) or going out in the cooler morning or evening (if it's summertime).

## Day 8: Set a Stuff Budget

There are only three days left in this challenge, and I'm sure your house is looking amazing! (But if it's not, jump on in because it's not too late for your home.)

Today we're going to talk about setting a stuff budget.

We all understand money is limited—we know we shouldn't spend more than what we have, or we'll eventually end up in a huge financial mess.

We also know that we need to plan, or budget, our time accordingly because each of us has exactly 24 hours every day.

I think a fact we sometimes miss, however, is that we also need to budget our *stuff*.

All of us have different houses and different family dynamics, just like we have different incomes and expenses, and our possessions need to neatly fit inside our homes while still meeting our family's needs.

If we have so much stuff that our homes feel cluttered, or if we have rooms that we can't even use, then we are not budgeting our things—our possessions—wisely.

Unless you want to constantly feel stressed out and overwhelmed, you should not keep more things than you have space for. For example, if you have four shelves' worth of towels but you only have one towel shelf, then you'll always have at least three shelves' worth of towels taking up space where they don't belong.

**If you want to have an organized home that your family enjoys living in, you need to budget your space accordingly.**

As you're cleaning, decluttering, and organizing, getting rid of extra things will help ensure your belongings fit neatly into your space.



If you struggle with getting rid of some items, remember that your donated items can be a huge blessing to someone who really needs them, and a wonderful blessing to your family as well, because you'll have a neater, more organized, easier-to-clean home to relax in and enjoy together!

*"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:19–21 NKJV)*

**Personal Reflection:** Pay attention to your attitude when messes start piling up. Are you willing to cheerfully pare down on the non-essentials, or do you tend to cling to items “just in case”? If you’re a keeper, grab a box or two that you can store keepsake items in, and limit keepsakes to the designated box(es) to prevent them from cluttering up your house.

**Home Assignment:**

- House tidy. Forget about perfection - just do this quickly and move on!
- Laundry. Even children as young as three can help fold and put away, so enlist help from your family members and finish catching up on laundry today.
- Set the timer and spend at least 30 to 60 minutes quickly working on the room you chose to declutter during this challenge (if you can dedicate more time than that, even better!).

**Special Tip:** Though taking care of our homes is important, our families care more about our attitudes than they do about living in a perfectly clean house. Love them well and treat them kindly.

**Reward Yourself:** Curl up with a good movie or your favorite TV show tonight.

## Day 9: Live in Gratitude

I sometimes wonder what it would be like to bring a woman from a third world country into my home. I imagine her excitement upon noticing my sink. *So many beautiful dishes! Running water! Oh, look at those soap bubbles!* I can almost see her giggle as she washes my plates, absolutely thrilled to help take care of them and put them into cupboards.

I imagine, when we're finished cleaning the kitchen, that I'll offer several hand-me-down outfits to her. She would exclaim excitedly again, trying to figure out the fastest way to get word back to her friends. *There are clothes! Enough for all of us! I can't wait to show you, to share with you, my friends!*

As dinnertime nears, I would open my fridge and she'd gasp with astonishment. *So much food! You are rich! Children, we will eat well tonight!* Thrilled beyond words, she would ask me how to start a cooking fire in the stove.

As I'd show her how to turn the knob, I'd contemplate her generosity and her excitement to share the work in my home. I would know she sees that I have enough for many people. Much more than I truly need.

And I would realize that I am blessed beyond measure. Compared to most of the world, I'm rich.

After months of wrestling within my soul, after feeling that cleaning isn't important, and wishing that I was doing something else, the blinders have been removed from my eyes and my heart as I finally understand:

**The best thing about cleaning isn't having a clean house afterward. The best thing about cleaning is simply *having things to clean.***

Homes to care for, dishes to eat from, food to enjoy, toys for our children to play with, plenty of outfits to wear...it's all so much. We are abundantly blessed.

**No amount of possessions or blessings can cultivate a thankful and content spirit—that must be a choice we make from within.**



Friend, when there are mountains of laundry all over the place, are you thankful that your family is blessed with plenty to wear, or are you annoyed about the work needing to be done?

I admit that, too often, I'm annoyed.

But we can train ourselves to choose gratitude instead. We should regularly pay attention to how we feel about messes in our homes, and gently redirect our thoughts as needed:

- When we see a pile of laundry, let's say, "I'm so thankful that we have so many clothes to wear."
- When our sinks are piled high with dishes, let's tell ourselves, "These dishes are evidence that we're creating memories around the dinner table."

- If our kids' bedroom is a danger zone, we can decide, "I have an incredible opportunity to teach my child an important life skill today!"

We have a choice—we can be thankful to have clothes to wear, food to eat, and a home to enjoy, or we can be irritated about the mess. Let's choose to have an attitude of gratitude.

**Personal Reflection:** Do you tend to feel annoyed or frustrated when your house continually gets messy? If so, write down your three biggest home annoyances; then list ways you can choose to be intentional about thankfulness.

**Home Assignment:**

- House tidy and laundry. Do this quickly and move on!
- Set the timer and spend at least 30 to 60 minutes wrapping up your declutter project in the room you chose for this challenge.
- Scrub the bathrooms.

**Special Tip:** If you didn't have time to completely organize the space that you've been focusing on for this challenge, collect the unorganized stuff in boxes or laundry baskets and move them to a closet.

Try not to stress too much about having everything completely perfect. Give yourself grace as you cram and shove so you can enjoy the look of a clean, calm home.

Mark a date on the calendar for when you will re-approach those items.

**Reward Yourself:** Make yourself a relaxing beverage and sit down outside - sans electronics - for 10 minutes to allow your body and mind to relax.

## Day 10: Choose the Harder Thing

I once had the opportunity to attend a presentation by [Glynnis Whitwer](#). During this presentation, Glynnis asked the audience what keeps us from working on our goals. Many of us eagerly called out things like:

- *I work outside the home.*
- *My kids are in 4 different sports.*
- *A loved one has a chronic illness.*
- *My schedule is full.*
- *I only have 15 minutes but I need 5 hours!*

Glynnis nodded while she listened and waited patiently for our voices to die down. Then she said, "Those are all good reasons, but they're not *the* reason. The real reason we don't work on our goals is because when faced with a choice between two tasks, our tendency is to choose whichever seems easier."

The room fell silent as her words sank in. My mind raced while I considered my own habits.

I thought about the moments I turned pages of a fiction novel instead of reading a single verse from my Bible. The evenings I browsed social media instead of making progress on a blog article.

And the mornings with 30 minutes spent looking at my phone before getting out of bed, even though I say I'm too busy to exercise.

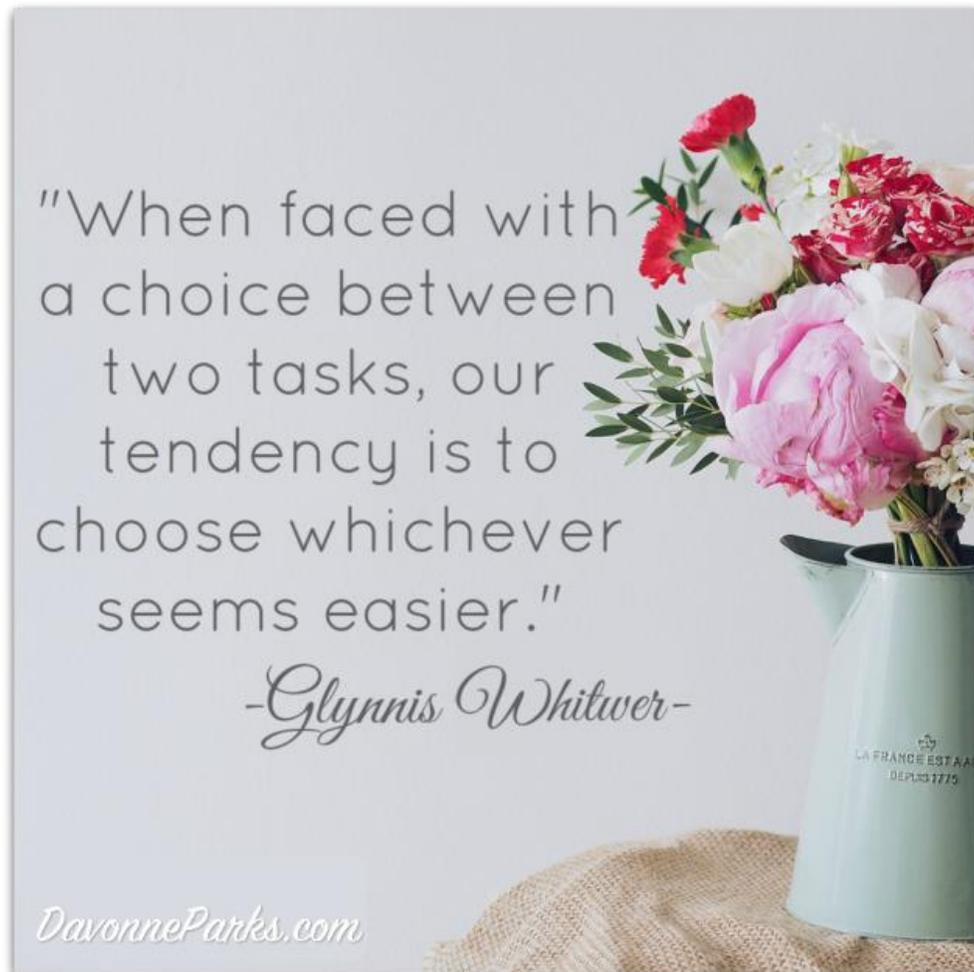
Her class was only an hour long, but the lessons have stuck with me for months now, and I've been paying attention to my own choices at home. I realized that I can carve out 15 to 30 minutes a day, even on the busiest days, to work on something that's important to me.

I don't think I'm alone. From diet plans to housekeeping goals, to the secret dreams we have tucked deep inside our hearts, many of us want great things for our lives, but when we're in the moment, we tend to make the easier choice.

I want to challenge you to purpose in your heart that you will choose the more difficult but better task. Go for a run instead of turning on the TV, make yourself a salad instead of reaching for a bag of chips, or put your shoes and bags away as soon as you get

home instead of dropping them by the door.

Whatever your goal is, make the choice that will help you reach it. Do something hard. On purpose. Then do it again.



**Personal Reflection:** Can you see areas in your own life where you tend to make the easier choice even when it doesn't line up with your deepest wishes and desires? Consider how you can work to choose the harder thing. Write down your answers, tell them to a friend, or share them in the [Tidy Up Facebook group](#) to help cement your goals in your mind.

**Home Assignment:**

- [Watch this video](#) if you'd like encouragement about your house not always staying as clean as you'd like.
- Quick house tidy and a load of laundry. Do this quickly and move on!
- Open the curtains; then dust, vacuum, and mop.
- Do one or two things to improve your yard—for example, you could put outdoor toys away, sweep the sidewalk, or straighten furniture on your porch.

**Special Tip:** When you're cleaning, it's nice to finish an entire room before moving on. But it's often more efficient to work in an assembly-line style. Dust the entire house. Then vacuum all of it. Then mop, and so on.

**Reward Yourself:** Celebrate big today! Walk around your house to savor your home. Light a candle and listen to music while you paint your fingernails. If it's in your budget, treat yourself to a fancy coffee or a \$10 item on Amazon.

**Connect with Me!** Did you finish this challenge? Do you have a homemaking question you'd love for me to answer? Simply email me at [Davonne@DavonneParks.com](mailto:Davonne@DavonneParks.com), [leave a comment on a blog post](#), or introduce yourself in the [Tidy Up Club](#). I'd love to get to know you so we can encourage each other while we work to make our homes the place we want to be!

## Further Encouragement: When You Wish Someone Would Hold Your Hand While You Clean

Congratulations on completing the *Making Your Home a Haven* challenge! I just know you did an amazing job, completed each task perfectly, and every inch of your home is now sparkling clean and ready for company.

... *Or not.* Maybe you read the entire challenge but didn't make as much progress as you'd hoped. Maybe you're feeling discouraged and wish that someone would just come over, hold your hand, and help you to make decisions about every area of your home.

Or, perhaps you made awesome progress in your house but you'd like support in finishing.

### **I think I can help.**

I want to offer you virtual hand-holding as you declutter your possessions. And if you implement the techniques I share, you'll no longer panic and hide when unexpected visitors come knocking on your door.

From inspirational quotes, to tips and encouragement, to simple maintenance plans and embarrassing stories, I will share with you a simple and realistic guide for restoring (or finding) order in your home.

No area will be left uncovered as you move step by step and room by room through a complete home-decluttering process.



**With help from me, you'll be able to:**

- tame your laundry monster
- tidy your home
- learn basic declutter tips
- stay ahead of the little ones
- declutter your entire home, step by step
- implement tips for when you're in a time crunch
- feel encouraged

While this *Making Your Home a Haven* guide offered encouragement for housekeeping heart issues and helped you to refresh your home, my virtual hand-holding eBook [\*Chaos to Clutter-Free\*](#) goes beyond the basics of surface-level clean. In this book, I will show

you how to dig in deep and declutter every square inch of your home, from the kitchen cabinets, to your storage closets, to childhood mementos and clothes.

We'll delve into the nitty-gritty of housekeeping, leaving no room for clutter or excuses.

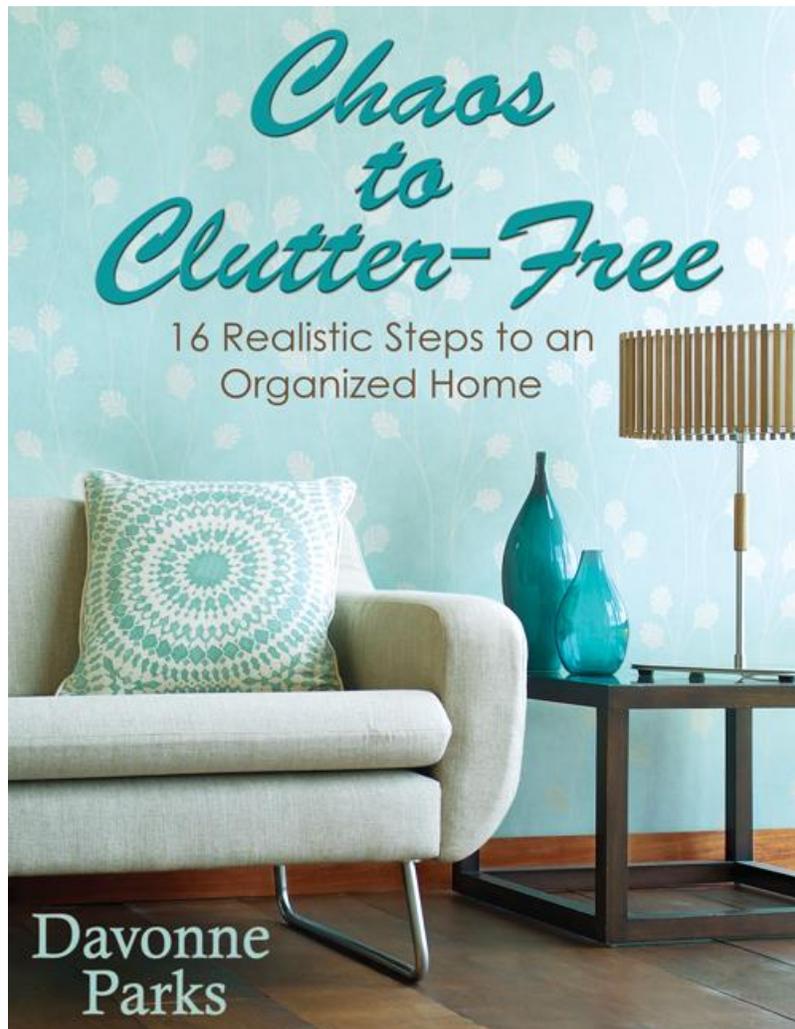


I've read countless decluttering books, and I know that my eBook is comparable to other organizational books that sell for much more. But I want this to be affordable to you. So for less than the cost of replacing one lost driver's license (and none of the frustration!), you can learn to completely declutter your entire home.

My own home has gone from absolutely chaotic to clutter-free, so I really understand how difficult, discouraging, and energy-zapping clutter can be. But I also know this: no matter where you are in life, and no matter how disorganized your home currently feels, there is hope. *Chaos to Clutter-Free* offers help so that you can make positive, lasting changes in your own home, starting today.

Having a clutter-free home has completely changed my family's life, and I know it can do the same for yours.

[Read more details or buy the \*Chaos to Clutter-Free\* eBook for just \\$4.99 here.](#)



## About the Author

[Davonne Parks](#) wants you to know, deep within your soul, that your role at home is valuable and she would love to help you thrive in your environment. [Click here](#) to receive immediate access to the FREE printable library she created just for you.

In addition to creating FREE content for her readers, Davonne is the author of [28 Days to Timeliness: Tips and Confessions from a Semi-Reformed Late Person](#), and [Chaos to Clutter-Free: 16 Realistic Steps to an Organized Home](#).



Outside of the blogging world, Davonne and her husband own a computer service company that they started together in 2005, and they've homeschooled their two daughters since 2009, when the oldest was 4 years old. Davonne also loves hot tea and hot chocolate on chilly days, freshly squeezed lemonade in the summer, and she is an adventure-seeker who regularly chases sunsets just to get a glimpse at a tiny piece of God's brilliantly displayed handiwork.

## Connect with the Author

Friend, I'm so glad you're here, and I'd love to hear from you!

You can email me at [Davonne@DavonneParks.com](mailto:Davonne@DavonneParks.com) and [join the email community](#) to receive occasional housekeeping inspiration and motivation directly in your inbox, along with exclusive access to [beautiful and practical freebies](#).

And did you know there's a **private [Tidy Up Club on Facebook](#)**? Club members from all over the world encourage and motivate each-other as we care for our homes. We'd love for [you to join us!](#)

You can also subscribe to my [Vimeo Channel](#) and follow me on [Instagram](#), [Pinterest](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#).