

This statement from the book “The Christian Wallet” by Mike Slaughter seems to reflect the thinking of many people today: “Despite [the] seemingly deep desire to downsize, simplify, and relax, we still wear two things as our primary badges of honor and self-worth—our stuff and our busyness.” How do you see that reflected in life around you? Why do you think that is true or not accurate?

Research shows the effects of a focus on materialistic values can result in increased aggression, competitiveness, often unhappiness in marriage, narcissistic personalities, personal adequacy, power seeking, and low self-worth. How does this seem a logical and true connection to you? How do you think “choosing what to eat, watch, and wear across so many available options contributes to feelings of stress?

One of the best ways to understand margins in life is to think about creating a document on the computer. If your aim is to have a one-page letter, that letter can be longer and longer and still be one page by creating smaller and smaller margins and fonts. Read Genesis 2:2, Exodus 20:8-10, Isaiah 5:8, and Mark 2:27. What do these verses say about the importance of margins in life?

Mike Slaughter writes that we form and grow relationships in the margins of our lives, we do acts of kindness or service, and we build our right relationship with God. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate yourself in regularly creating and using the margins in your life? In what ways do your margins mirror your faith and a faithful life to those around you?

How do we break free from this addiction [to things and stuff] and live more simply? If you are doing this with a group or another person, discuss. Then read Matthew 8:20; Luke 9:3–4; Luke 10:4, and Philippians 4:11–13. Ask: How do these verses help us prioritize the use of the resources entrusted with us?

What areas of your life need wider margins? Do you need to simplify your schedule, spending, or belongings? What is at least one change you plan to make so that their wallet and use of financial resources better reflect their Christian faith. Write that on a card and put it in your Bible, to remind you of the change you want to make this year.

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