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Finding Purpose in the Clutter: A Review of The Minimalist Home

Abstract

"Two years in to minimalism, my family has no desire to go back to our old way of life."

Posting about the book *The Minimalist Home* from *In All Things* - an online journal for critical reflection on faith, culture, art, and every ordinary-yet-graced square inch of God's creation.

<https://inallthings.org/finding-purpose-in-the-clutter-a-review-of-the-minimalist-home/>

Keywords

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Comments

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in things

February 14, 2019

Finding Purpose in the Clutter: A Review of *The Minimalist Home*

Kayt Frisch

Title: *The Minimalist Home: A Room-by-Room Guide to a Decluttered, Refocused Life*

Author: Joshua Becker

Publisher: WaterBrook

Publishing Date: December 18, 2018

Pages: 256 pages (Hardcover)

ISBN: 978-1601427991

What is the purpose of your home?

Have you ever stopped to think about it? If you pause for a moment and think about specific rooms in your house you might conclude that different parts of your house have different purposes—maybe you have spaces for entertaining guests, gathering as a family, resting, and refreshing yourself.

The spaces in our homes are the places where we create meaning for ourselves and for our loved ones. Imagine your living room—the most public of your private spaces. What kind of meaning do you want the space to cultivate? Now focus on the details of the room—the furniture, the wall decorations, the other contents. Do the things in that space help or hinder the meaning you are trying to create in that space? If you don't feel like the two visions align, can you imagine changes that might help you better serve your purposes?

These questions can be difficult to consider but taking the time to answer them honestly and act on your reflections can be a powerful way to help orient your life around the things you value most. In his new book, *The Minimalist Home*, Joshua Becker helps

readers answer these questions, focusing a chapter at a time on each space in the home.

Becker is one of today's prominent voices advocating for social change via minimalism. Minimalism is sometimes misconstrued as owning as little as possible, but that is not what Becker is advocating. In the first two chapters of *The Minimalist Home* he advocates for a vision of minimalism where individuals and families own the optimal number of possessions for them. He recognizes that "optimal" will look different for different people and at different times. In his words, "Minimalism isn't about removing the things that you love. It's about removing the things that distract you from the things that you love." His philosophy is similar to Marie Kondo's popular "spark joy" method, but it goes much deeper, reflecting his Christian faith and focuses on a big picture calling to make a difference in the world (as opposed to just focusing on oneself).

In the second chapter Becker describes the process he will lead readers through in the following chapters: a room-by-room minimizing guide. Each of the subsequent chapters begins with reflection on the purpose of the room, and then provides a step-by-step guide to minimizing in that room. At the end of each chapter, he provides a checklist to help you know when you have arrived.

My family has been (working towards becoming) minimalist for about two years now and we recently applied Becker's thinking to a space in our home. A few months ago, we inadvertently acquired a second couch and found ourselves with an opportunity to rearrange our living room. Prior to becoming minimalists, my instinct would have been to just cram the additional seating into the space, but two years of seeing the benefits of minimalism in our lives convinced us that the appropriate thing to do was to remove things from the space to promote the things we value: quality time and good conversation. We live in a small house and the purposes of our living room are primarily kid play space, adult relaxation space, and hosting groups as large as 12 adults in a way that facilitates discussion. We decided to arrange the couches facing each other, remove the TV (it's now in the attic and we use our laptop when we want to watch something), move the kids toy shelf into the entry alcove (just off the room) and place the storage sideboard that had been under the TV where the toy shelf had been. It took less than 24 hours for us to realize that moving the kids toys out of the room affected how welcome they felt in the room, so we swapped the sideboard and the toy shelf. The space now more clearly promotes our values (and as a bonus, makes it easy to clean up the toys, transforming it into an adult-focused space).

Two years in to minimalism, my family has no desire to go back to our old way of life. We appreciate the freedom that has come with minimalism—we spend less money on stuff, our house is a neater and more relaxing place to be, and we are content in a

small (by cultural standards) space. In short, we feel freer to pursue our callings in life. As a result, we are starting to encourage our family and friends to consider minimalism and have the following advice for how to introduce someone to the ideas. Both this book and Becker's previous book *The More of Less* (2017) are excellent resources to help someone begin their minimalism journey. *The More of Less* is more persuasive—making a case for the problem and its root in our obsession with stuff, as well as broadly suggesting how to fix it. *The Minimalist Home*, on the other hand, is much more of a how-to guide. The first two chapters hit the highlights from the previous book but then it jumps straight into the specifics of how to minimize. If you are looking to understand why a minimalist philosophy might be helpful, start with *The More of Less*. If you are looking for help getting started (or motivation to continue) minimizing, read *The Minimalist Home*. Either way, you won't regret it.