

31 Days of the Little Way: The Clutter on the Table

Many nights as I'm cooking dinner, I look at the table where we need to eat and realize it's covered.

No, not with a tablecloth or plates or forks.

It's littered with homework papers and toys. There are pieces of mail and magazines. There are field trip forms and report cards and an empty Easter egg. There are pencils and scissors and glue sticks and Pokemon cards and bags of fake cobwebs to use to decorate the front yard.

How does it all land here? What is it about horizontal surfaces that makes them magnets for clutter?



I could ask for help clearing the table, but it's the end of the day.

Everyone is tired.

And most of the people I would ask for help don't know where or how to put it all away.

So I dive into the piles, sorting and straightening, digging to find the surface of the table so I can serve dinner. And, as I work, I try not to see this small job as a burden.

In a way, the piles on the table offer a snapshot into our lives.

I am not surprised that everything lands here on the table. This is where we place what matters to us, the items we don't want to lose. This table, where we eat all our meals at home, somehow seems like the safe place to put things we want to hold onto.

No wonder. This table, after all, is where we gather as a family. It's where we say grace and add prayers for those who are on our minds and hearts. It's where we play board games and focus on homework and delve into projects. It's a center of activity in our home. No wonder it attracts all these random pieces from our lives.

As I move items off the table one by one, hoping no one misses the sticky rubber eyeball I just tossed, I think of the clutter in our lives—especially as we come home from a long, full day.

Watching my tired family trying to unwind from the day, I realize why I need to shift this mess for all of us. We need to be able to come to the table and bring the assortment of things that are on our minds.

We need room to talk and share and ask and answer and laugh and complain and wonder.

We need to be able to bring our messy thoughts and questions and conversation.
We need to be able to listen and respond—and we can only do that in the right space.

So I'm not clearing the table for plates of food. I'm clearing the table to make room for us to connect with one another.

Somehow that doesn't feel like a chore.

