



More or Less: Choosing a Lifestyle of Excessive Generosity

Jeff Shinabarger

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

More or Less: Choosing a Lifestyle of Excessive Generosity

Jeff Shinabarger

More or Less: Choosing a Lifestyle of Excessive Generosity Jeff Shinabarger

In More or Less, Jeff Shinabarger calls readers to create their own social experiments to answer the question, “What is enough?”

It all started with one idea: What would happen if we created a culture in which we gave away whatever was more than enough for us? How would our habits change if we shed the excess of money, clutter, and food in our lives? In *More or Less*, readers will learn how to draw a line of “enough” in their consumer choices, how to see generosity as a chance to experience freedom in a greedy world, and how to make small changes now that will help others forever. As Shinabarger reminds them, defining “enough” is more than a responsibility—it is an opportunity to give hope.

More or Less: Choosing a Lifestyle of Excessive Generosity Details

Date : Published March 1st 2013 by David C. Cook

ISBN : 9780781408202

Author : Jeff Shinabarger

Format : Hardcover 272 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Christian, Self Help, Audiobook, Religion, Christianity

 [Download More or Less: Choosing a Lifestyle of Excessive Generos ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online More or Less: Choosing a Lifestyle of Excessive Gener ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online More or Less: Choosing a Lifestyle of Excessive Generosity Jeff Shinabarger

From Reader Review More or Less: Choosing a Lifestyle of Excessive Generosity for online ebook

Saira says

The whitest, and most blatantly U.S.-centric, suburban commentary on excess that I've ever considered reading. Somehow, I'm glad I forced myself to finish it. As usually happens, the more determined my resistance to hear a person's message, the more I have to learn from it. The author is entitled and naive, and yet all the stories I want to call arrogant, are still at their core, genuinely generous. I realized that these stories were so difficult for me because I have the privilege of being surrounded by people who have built their lives around generosity, reducing excess, and creating community beyond narrow and shared experiences. That said, the number of examples that started with "just" asking friends to pony up \$100 a month, or give away "all those" unused gift cards, makes me wonder whether the author actually knows anyone on a fixed income. The multiple solutions for creating secondary economies of excess require someone else to buy one's stuff. Yep, even though he started with the risks of gift cards, somehow he became the hero of that chapter by starting an organization that gives unused cards to people in need. The examples, yeah yeah, I get it - there are good uses for gift cards. But in essence it still comes off as us vs. them. And again, who has thousands of dollars of unused gift cards lying around?!?! Pardon me, but that alone makes it hard for me to relate.

All that said (rant over), the chapter on time is worth the entire book. "Busy is the new fine." Yes. And busy is not fine. Busy means somehow you're in pain, and unwilling or unable to address that pain. Ultimately I can get behind anyone interested in asking these questions, and can get behind a rich white male spreading the concepts of less is more, family first, avoiding the modern disease of "busy".

Sarah says

The first chapter was the only part I really enjoyed. I wrote "WHAT ABOUT JESUS?" on about every other page. For a book that claimed to be a Christian book, there was little to do with Jesus or the implications of His work or the kingdom on our generosity. Not once was 2 Corinthians 8 quoted! What a waste! The author would have been better off writing for a completely irreligious, humanistic audience for as little spiritual emphasis as there was.

Also his ideas, while creative and fun, do assume that everyone reading the book has the same income level as he does. "10 friends get together once a month and put \$100 on the table to give away." he writes as an idea. Although I certainly have excess and want the Lord to refine my attitude toward resources I have, I certainly don't have an extra hundred dollars laying around. Even his assumption in that made me feel the distance between his income and mine, exactly what he wants to reduce in the book.

HOWEVER, we are reading this for our assigned reading at school and I hope it is a good starting point for self-examination in the lives of my students who don't understand how privileged they are.

Ashley (JaffaCaffa) says

3.5 Stars. This book definitely opened my eyes. I've always been quick to volunteer and donate monthly since I was around 9, but I never really thought about how much excess I really have and how many more little (and big!) things I can do. Maybe it would've been better if I'd read the book rather than listening to the

audiobook so I could skim bits, but I wish he'd given more details about the stories rather than repeating himself about having excess every story. I think with many of them he could've "shown" rather than "tell", which he did sometimes and those were the stories I enjoyed the most (ie: the refugees). Either way I would definitely recommend this book to anyone, I just would recommend the book over the audiobook so that the reader can read the stories/challenges and skip some of the repeating pep talks. Thank you Jeff and everyone else mentioned in the book for the selflessness actions you do to help others. Hopefully this book will help others take actions too, one step at a time.

Regina says

Don't read this. Instead read George Muller's biography by Janet and Geoff Benge. Or "Daring to Live on the Edge" by Loren Cunningham. Or Randy Alcorn's "Money, Possessions and Eternity". These books will introduce you to real people who learned to live with less through real life trials and learned deep truths about the Lord while they were at it.

I'm so disappointed in this book that was profiled by WORLD magazine. I expected a faith-based book with real ideas about how to decide how much is enough, not ideas about how to manufacture artificial "social experiments", like choosing to walk to work for 40 days or wearing through every outfit in one's wardrobe once before wearing it again in order to experience "solidarity" with those who don't have enough money to have extensive wardrobes. ??

This book was very thin on trust in Christ's guidance and thick, thick, thick on feel-good humanism. :-)

Lauren Albrecht says

I've been borderline obsessed with getting rid of STUFF in our lives, but this book was a great reminder that it's not about just clearing space in our lives. It's about being generous to others with what we have. I loved the authors perspective and relationship with Clarence. This book provided many tangible ways to challenge myself to grow in generosity.

Christy Bower says

Jeff Shinabarger tells the story of how he moved to a new home in Atlanta and the neighborhood welcoming committee showed up on his doorstep. It was a homeless guy named Clarence who was eager to let the new neighbor know he was "looking for work." Jeff suddenly saw his life through Clarence's eyes and realized he had an overabundance of almost everything.

This change in perspective caused Jeff and his wife to engage in a series of social experiments. For instance, after receiving a credit-card bill in January they realized they had overspent at Christmas and didn't have the means to pay the bill. They cut back their spending and decided to see if they could go for an entire month by eating only the food in the house. They lasted seven weeks without going to the grocery store.

The author also recounts the social experiments of his friends who tried things like going without a car when theirs broke down. In all, the book is an easy to read collection of thought-provoking stories. Some readers have criticized the book for not having enough Christian content, but the author's goal was not to be preachy.

Rather, he wanted to create a sharable book for people regardless of their spiritual comfort level.

I thought personal experiences shared in the book really created a credible message, even more so than quoting a bunch of Bible verses. Rather, the stories made the struggle of determining how much is enough believable and relatable. We all have the tendency to want more and more stuff. Breaking that habit is uncomfortable, at best. By sharing his own challenges, he made it easier for others to embrace the difficulties of defining for ourselves how much is enough.

He also provided thoughtful examples of ways we can benefit others with our excess. It's not simply about living with less, but about making a difference with the excess we have. Our excess can meet the needs of others if we consider how to make it happen.

Joseph Bunting says

I want to read More or Less with all my friends. Jeff Shinabarger wants to change the world, but he doesn't guilt trip you into helping him. Instead, he tells you about the simple experiments in generosity conducted by him and his friends. The lesson: we all have excess, whether it's money, time, relationships, or even love. Sharing our excess with others doesn't affect us much, but it can change someone else's life. I came away from this book feeling rich and wanting to give it away.

Bethany Turner says

Have you ever read one of those books that just wrecks you in a good way? Well, this is one of those books for me. More or Less challenged me. I had to put it down several times to process what I was reading. I will be contemplating and wrestling with this material all my life.

This book will challenge your thinking of how to live in excessive generosity, but it does not make you feel guilty. Jeff gives plenty of real world examples of how living generously can be lived out and gives you challenges to start living generously right away.

Let's change the world!

Mark says

While he does have good ideas, not everyone will do things that change the world. Most of his examples are extraordinary and I would say even uncommon from the majority. I don't believe you have to dream big and try to change the world. To me, just being able to change one person's life will make a huge impact.

While it's nice to think that excessive generosity will change the world, not every idea works, leading to more disappointment. Everyone can practice the little generosityes. From doing things for the elderly (mowing their lawn, taking them shopping, etc.) the poor (buying them lunch or clothing). From battered women or drug addicted people. There are many ways to make an impact.

I believe a better book would be "Start Small". Simple acts of kindness are easier for everyone to do and I believe in "pay it forward". If nice things are done for you, chances are you will want to do nice things for others.

Sorry. Ranting.

Jen says

The gist of this book can be boiled down to the following principles:

1. Here is a thing that you take for granted and probably have too much of.
2. I, too, once had too much of the thing, but now I don't.
3. You should examine your own life and downsize or get rid of the thing.
4. Here's some generic action steps on how to deal with the thing!

I know that I have too many clothes and shoes, too much space, too much time. That is what the minimalist movement is all about; I would much rather read a book about how to build my own house and think strategically and sustainably about how I'd like to live. To me, this book falls into the trap of many self-help books: it tells you to identify a problem you're having, and gives extremely general ideas on how to solve it.

You don't need to read this book to know that being generous with your time, belongings, and money can make you feel better and enact more positive changes. So don't.

Meredith says

While this was a challenging book and really made me reevaluate all the stuff I own, I felt a very large void in Shinabarger's major theme of generosity. It's great if you can live a simple life, own only what you NEED, and give the rest to those in need (and I agree with trying to live that type of life), but the book failed to realize two things.

1) We enjoy these privileges and "extra" things in America because of the men and women who have died to allow us the freedoms and opportunities to own our own property, drink clean water, etc. While I don't say this to be a snobby American or say that we deserve or need all the "extra stuff" of life, I am proud to live in America where our Founding Fathers and economic system is such that I can own these things and live a comfortable, enjoyable life. It's not my responsibility to feed and clothe the world...but it's my responsibility to have compassion on them and help those around me...

2) We have a bigger responsibility to point others to Christ, not just generously give them our excess of "stuff." It bothered me to no end that Shinabarger used the example of the homeless man in his community throughout the whole book and never once talked about speaking to this man of Christ. He was so happy to have helped the man with his basic physical needs but never once mentioned his spiritual needs.

If Shinabarger never mentioned that he was a Christian, then I would have given this book 5 stars. From a secular standpoint, the book was challenging and very enjoyable. But knowing that this man is a Christian (from comments he made, I assume him to be born again), I was very disappointed in the lack of spiritual emphasis.

Stephanie says

Free audio version of this at: <http://tinyurl.com/me6kyna>

This is an awesome, challenging book. It's written by a Christian, but it is for a general audience. It contains a lot of scriptural principles, but written in a way that would challenge anyone. While I want the gospel to be my chief motivation toward generosity and Christ my prime example, I think this book is useful and has its place. I found myself adding the Word to the chapters as I thought about them. I didn't necessarily agree with every line of thought and one chapter rubbed me the wrong way. However, I walked away from nearly every chapter challenged and thankful that I had listened to it. I appreciated that the author never laid on the "You're rich and don't care about the poor and therefore, you suck" guilt trip that other books lead to; instead, he uses personal experiences and reasoning to gently prod you to consider your own wealth and priorities.

Artemisia Hunt says

I happened upon this book a while back in a used book store and it was really the subtitle that caught my attention: *Choosing a Lifestyle of Excessive Generosity*. I'm a firm believer in the power of generosity to change the world, and apparently too is author Jeff Shinabarger. Reading *More or Less*, one can't help but be caught up in Jeff's passionate approach to generosity. Here is a man who seems to truly walk his talk when he advocates that we should all be turning our excess into someone else's enough; that our excess can indeed help fulfill the needs of those less fortunate, less connected or less gifted. Whether he is talking about food, clothing, money, time, our connections (what he calls access), or even gift cards we've received, Shinabarger shows how we all have something extra in our life that can be generously shared to make someone else's life better. At a time when there can seem to be so much greed and entitlement in the world, Jeff's book is a welcome and inspiring breath of fresh new air.

Alexis Neal says

An excerpt of a review recently posted on Schaeffer's Ghost:

Fourth, Shinabarger's analysis of generosity is secular—by which I mean: a compassionate Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, pagan, or atheist could agree with ... everything in this book. I find this troubling. While it is certainly true that those outside the faith can be generous and do good things, Christians' lives should be pervaded by the Gospel such that it is impossible for us to really explain why we do *any* good thing without reference to Christ the Source of All Good. Christ is the reason we *can* do good things, He is the reason our sinful hearts *want* to do good things, and His is the power that *enables* us to do good things. Yet Shinabarger's exploration of generosity seemed to be, well, largely secular. Faith lifts right out without disturbing the substance of his points.

For these reasons, I would argue that Shinabarger's book, while practically useful, is not actually a Christian book. So if you're looking to simplify, make do with less, or give more, then by all means read this book. Even better, read it with a friend and engage with the material. Open your Bible and see where Shinabarger is right, and where he's wrong. What does the Bible have to say about generosity? What sins in your life keep you from obeying those commands, and how can you fight those sins? How does the Gospel inform our attitude toward our possessions, our food, our clothes, and our time? How can Christians spur one another on to love and good deeds in these areas? These questions, and many more, are well worth asking. Shinabarger doesn't ask them, but I appreciate him at least starting the conversation.

Full review available [here](#).

Sarah says

I have a lot of stuff, despite my efforts not to. And I let myself off the hook, because I know my kids don't have as many toys as the Joneses and our house isn't anything fancy next to the Watkinses and we don't spend money like the Finches. Even so, the idea of not having more than you need has been something I've been trying to live for quite some time.

So the idea behind *More or Less: Choosing a Life of Excessive Generosity*, by Jeff Shinabarger, appealed to me.

That is, until I started reading it.

Last week, in my weekly reading update, I wrote, "This book is another life-changer and game-changer for me. (I'm not exactly thrilled about that, because I wasn't necessarily LOOKING to have things go all changey-changey on me!)"

Yeah. That times ten.

I was struck, first, by the challenge that we have enough food. I think I'll be attacking my cupboards soon. And my freezer. But meal-planning did cure me of a lot of that, to be honest.

And the clothes thing is something that I've been on top of. I need to do some more weeding through, true enough, but not something that made me do more than think more deeply about my other excess.

And then, *then*, there was the chapter on time.

There was a time, not so long ago, when the polite answer to the question "How are you?" was, "Fine." It seems that *busy* is the new fine. We look at one another with that shake of the head, sideways smirk, and glossy eyes, proclaiming our busyness. This shared response succinctly identifies a recent cultural shift: we now determine the significance of a person by how busy they are. Somehow, busy has become better than fine. It seems especially highlighted since the economic downturn. Busy shows that we still have a job and things to do, which is a positive answer amidst the endlessly looping, negative news cycle.

The problem is this: busy is not better than fine. Just because I'm busy does not mean I'm fine. And when it comes right down to it, often busy means that I'm not fine at all. What we're really saying with one simple word is, "I can't keep up with everything in my life. I actually can't keep up with any of the things in my life. But that makes me important, doesn't it?"

Oh. Wow. But there's more...

Often the first ball we drop is our relationships. Being "busy" quickly becomes a barrier or excuse in the way of true community. I am busy, and many of my friends know that I am busy. When the only answer I ever give them in response to the question "How are you?" is, "Busy," this communicates that I don't have time for them. When I constantly say, "I'm busy," I communicate to others that "I don't need you right now." Most of our friends pick up this subtle message and stay away.

What we often realize too late is that our "busy" answer is actually a choice not to engage in our community. We choose to do other stuff over hanging out with our friends. If I continue to tell myself the lie that busy is good, I slowly enter into more of an isolated and a self-centered existence.

And here's the kicker:

...if we are too busy to engage in relationships, we face a larger problem. When I respond and tell you I am too busy, too often I actually need your help. Often in those times when we most need a deep relationship, instead of pursuing that relationship, we embrace our task list and avoid the comfort and support that true friendship can offer. And the result of being extra busy, ironically, is loneliness and depression.

Time is worth more than money to so many people I know, and yes, even to me. I've been working hard over the last five years especially to hone in my "here's what can be done" approach to my life. And yet...and yet I feel like I fail.

Why does there have to be so much to do?

Part of it's having kids, part of it's having a lot of small project work, part of it's that I have to be at a certain level of busy to function well.

But what Shinabarger is outlining in this chapter so well is a different approach to time, one that I've been flirting with and haven't yet been able to articulate. In fact, just a few paragraphs later, he talks about something that has been on my heart since the smartphone explosion all around me (nope, I'm *NOT* getting one) and since my kids have gotten older: presence.

Presence is not fast, big, or cheap. You cannot replace presence with someone or something else. Presence is an essential element that we all need and desire in our deepest relationships. It's unspoken. It's true. It's the greatest encouragement anyone can ever receive or give. Presence is a physical expression of love in the midst of a culture that never stops—it is to stop and be with someone that matters.

He goes on to define and outline some time indicators and that may help you, as they helped me, to further consider how my time spent reflects on what my priorities truly are.

There are 14 chapters in *More or Less*, covering virtually everything in your life, from your kitchen pantry to your closet to your time, from your transportation to your presents to your access. I didn't find it a fast read, though it's a VERY good read. I found I could only manage so much before my brain sort of stopped. I needed to noodle a bit before I could read more.

It's practical and applicable and it doesn't just leave you with a good idea. Shinabarger outlines a general plan of action after he shares how he or others approached what he calls Enough Experiments. In fact, he went so far as to build a pretty rockin website that has links to the videos mentioned in the book, a discussion guide, and a worksheet to help you with your closet.

What makes this an incredible book isn't just that it's tightly written, that it has a thread of story running through the whole thing, that Jeff sounds like the kind of guy you would probably like. What makes this a remarkable read is the challenge it leaves in your heart, the way it forces you to acknowledge your role in the

world at large, whether you choose to engage or not. It reminds me, in fact, of how I felt and continue to feel after reading *Refuse to Do Nothing*.

Read this book. And then share it with someone close to you.
