

26th February 2024

Essential

"Whatever decision, or challenge, or crossroads you face in your life, simply ask yourself, 'What is essential?' Eliminate everything else."

Greg McKeown, *Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less*

There's a regular feature in *The Oldie* magazine entitled *On the Road*, in which celebrities are interviewed about their travelling experiences. The opening question is always the same: "Is there anything you can't leave home without?" The answers are interesting: iPhone charger; notebook and pencil; earplugs; local-language phrasebook; book of crosswords; medication; nail clippers; tea bags; swimming nose-clip. The "essentials" vary depending on the needs and preferences of the traveller. What's essential to one will not be considered to be essential by another.

Try it! It's an interesting exercise. It also makes for a fascinating discussion round a tea table, for not only does it reveal our different preferences, but it can also lead to an exploration of the "why?" of such essentials, and even point to hitherto unrevealed personality quirks.

But take the thought-process further. What is essential to life? Food, clothing, shelter, justice, peace, and the like, are obvious essentials, rightly enshrined in UN charters and codes of Human Rights. But, notwithstanding the importance of these, what is essential to *your* life, right now? Like the *On the road* feature, your answer will be a personal one. But if it matters to you, then it's worth thinking about. And, recognising its value, ask yourself how you can preserve and cherish that essential, *and* give more thanks for it than you do.

Greg McKeown is author of *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* bestseller, *Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less*. In it he writes:

To discern what is truly essential we need space to think, time to look and listen, permission to play, wisdom to sleep, and the discipline to apply highly selective criteria to the choices we make.

Eliminate everything else. It's discernment time! Give yourself the space to think. Take time to look and listen, and ask yourself "What is essential?" Be "highly selective", or if you can't be, then make a longer list. Either way, you'll be doing yourself some good – and it might lead to some interesting conversations round your tea table.

A prayer for today

Essential? To know what love means might be a good place to start.