

## **Finding Freedom from the Overloaded Life**

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Rich Nathan

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Renewing Your Spiritual Passion Series

Luke 10:38-42

I've been doing a series on Renewing Your Spiritual Passion since I came back from my sabbatical this past summer. And through the series we've been looking at Jesus' encounter with a number of different people and how an encounter with Jesus set people's hearts on fire.

Now, one of the great obstacles to having an encounter with Jesus is an overloaded life. I want to fix in your minds a picture of the overloaded life and it comes from professional football. I don't know how widespread this practice was in professional football, but I read a story of a Chicago Bears Defensive Secondary that to me was a perfect illustration of the overloaded life.

Apparently, in the Chicago Bears' locker room, when one of the little guys annoyed one of the really big guys, the big guys would splash the little guy in the locker room. And what splashing was, basically, was that if one of the smaller players – the cornerbacks, the safeties, one of the defensive secondaries got a annoying, a really big guy would grab him and fall on him.

So this 180 pound player named David Tate talks about a time when 350 pound Refrigerator Perry grabbed him and fell on him. And then on top of Refrigerator Perry was 275 pound defensive lineman Richard Dent. And on top of him, 275 pound Dan Hampton. And on top of him, 275 pound Steve McMichael. So, we are talking about 1200 pounds laying on you. Can you imagine that?

You say, "That could kill a person! How could he breathe?"

Well, that's the picture in my mind of the way that most of us in America live. We live under the pile. We are so overloaded that we can hardly breathe.

How many of you are being crushed right now by a load of debt? Back in 1910 the Sears Catalog had a page in which the President of Sears condemned what he called the "folly of buying on credit." Sears committed itself to a cash only policy. A year later, they reversed it because they were losing so much business to other stores who were selling on an installment plan.

The way that General Motors initially gained its market share against Ford was that GM started to sell cars on the installment plan in 1919. Ford waited until 1928, and it never regained its dominance in the American market.

Do you realize that more people during the prosperous 1990's went bankrupt by way of percentage of the population than during the Depression? There are nearly a million and a half personal bankruptcies every year in the United States. The misuse of credit and credit cards is more often the cause of people's financial problems than all other causes combined, including unemployment, illness, and divorce. If you take all the terrible things that can happen to someone, they all don't amount to the load of debt that people are carrying. Americans are living under \$750 billion dollars of credit card debt. \$750 billion dollars.

But it is not just debt that is piled on top of us. We're overloaded by choices. Walk into the average grocery store. There are over 200 different choices of breakfast cereal. Purchase a satellite dish and choose from over 3000 different movies a month.

Debt overload; choice overload; information overload. There are over 30 million books in the Library of Congress. There is something like 40,000 scientific journals. I have no idea how many websites there are. We are overloaded with information.

We are overloaded with media. The average family in the US watches about 7 hours of television a day. Before graduating from high school, students will see on TV 200,000 violent acts, 60,000 murders, and 360,000 commercials. By the age of 65, a person will watch 2 million commercials.

Folks are also suffering from expectation overload. Life should have no boundaries. I should be able to do anything that I want to do and meet everyone's demands all the time. No limits, no boundaries, activity overload, constant multitasking. Driving the other morning on 270 with Marlene, we noticed that every person we mapped had something in addition to the steering wheel in their hand. They had a coffee cup, a cell phone, makeup. I even saw something I have never seen before; a woman was driving and eating a bowl of cereal!

There is a wonderful book that I can't recommend highly enough for those of you who are living the overloaded life. It is called Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives. It's by a physician named Richard Swenson. This would be a great book to discuss chapter by chapter for some of you men to use in men's groups, or some of you to use as study material in your home groups.

But in this book called Margin, which we have some copies of in the bookstore, Swenson describes the exponential growth of certain things so that what we have on so many graphs of life is this J-curve. If you just graph information, the amount of information that is out there, you could go 1910, 1920, 1930, 1940, 1950, 1960 – and then at 1960 it hits this exponential curve.

The same thing is true in the gross national product. It continues along fairly steadily until 1960 and then it just goes off the chart.

The same thing is true with the national debt, in bankruptcies, in health care costs, in the number of divorces, in the volume of junk mail. Talk about overload – how much junk mail and junk email do you get every day? Under all of this pile, there is no breathing room. Or to use Richard Swenson's term, "no margin, no space." You are constantly running at 110%.

If I were to diagnose the one single problem, more than any other, that keeps people in America from having true spiritual passion, it is the overloaded life. There is simply no room in our lives for deep relationships with each other and an intimate relationship with God. We Americans are exhibit A of what Jesus was talking about when he said, "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his soul."

We've gained the whole world. For the first time in history, the issue is that there is not enough, the issue is not scarcity. The issue is overabundance. Childhood obesity is off the charts.

In the story we are going to read today, Jesus tells us how we can regain some breathing room, some space, some margin in our lives. I've called today's talk, "Finding Freedom from the Overloaded Life." Let's pray.

*Luke 10:38-42 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him.*

The village, of course, was Bethany. Bethany was 2-3 miles southeast of Jerusalem. It is just on the other side of the Mount of Olives. Bethany would be to Jerusalem like Pickerington or Reynoldsburg is to Columbus. The center of town is just a couple of miles from the edge of Jerusalem.

Again, by way of background, I want you, as we are looking at the story, to note the very warm and incredibly hospitable relationship that Jesus had with women. If you go through the book of Luke, in particular, you see Jesus' extraordinary relationships with women. Women are regularly found among Jesus' disciples. If you are taking notes, you might want to jot down Luke 8:1-2. It lists the names of some of the women who were followers of Jesus.

Rabbis refused to teach women the Torah. One rabbi said, "Whoever teaches his daughter Torah, it is though he has taught her obscenity." Another rabbi said, "If you look at the biblical exhortation, 'Teach your children,' the Hebrew word for children literally denotes 'your sons' and so excludes daughters." Indeed, one rabbi went so far as to state, "Let the words of the Torah rather be destroyed by fire than be imparted to a woman."

In total contrast to this, Jesus is regularly teaching Bible and, as a Jewish rabbi, his own words were Torah. He is regularly teaching women followers. There is Mary sitting at his feet, taking the posture of a disciple or a student learning for her teacher. Martha is

taking the traditional role assigned to women; she was working in the kitchen. So what's the problem?

"Martha was distracted by all of the preparations that had to be made."

That word "distracted" literally means to be drawn away or dragged away. And it indicates that an overloaded life draws a person away or drags them away from something that is valuable.

You see, this is a very subtle thing. That what a person is drawn away from or dragged away from by the overloaded life is relationship, personal connectedness, intimacy. And what a person begins to do through an overloaded life is substitute working and tasks and activity for relationship. Part of the seductiveness of an overloaded life is often very well-intentioned. We are going to work very hard and we are going to work 60 or 70 hours a week or more so that we can provide wonderful things for our children. Things that, perhaps, we didn't have growing up. And we are going to be able to give them the kind of life and home and education that will bless them. That is all very well intentioned. But what you are being drawn away from and dragged away from through your many hours of work is relationship and connectedness to your children.

We see the same thing with husbands and wives. The wife is busy making curtains, sewing things and cooking and cleaning. Or you, as a husband, may be the kind of man who is always putzing around the house and you always have a project going. Or you may be like me, you are always reading or writing something or thinking about something. All of that is very well-intentioned and you have noble goals that you can attach to all of this. But there is a distraction because of your overloaded life. The distraction comes out—Marlene expresses it to me when I am in my worst moments of distractedness. She will say, "You know, Rich, even when you are home, you are not really home. You are not there and you are not being there for me or for the children. You are dragged away, drawn away by overloaded life from relationship."

You know that the biggest excuse that people make for not connecting with one of our small groups is busy-ness, life overload. "Gosh, I would love to meet with other Christians, but life is so crazy right now. Maybe in the future when I get more time." Friend, you will never have more time. You are always going to have only 24 hours in every day and 168 hours in every week. Your overloaded life is dragging you away from other things.

Now, this is precisely what is going on with Martha. Her overloaded life dragged her away, drew her away from relationship with her sister and relationship with Jesus. What a subtle thing overloaded life is. Because here Martha was doing something for the Lord. She was busy doing ministry, if you will. Serving, the same word is used for ministry. Doing it for Jesus. And yet in all of that she was being drawn away from relating to her sister and to Jesus, and being connected to Jesus.

Let me go through some of the marks of overload, of being really distracted and drawn away. Obviously, psychotherapists and physicians see the signs of overloaded life

every day. I mean one of the things that physicians have told me is that a high percentage of the problems that they see [and I have heard this from orthopedists, general practitioners], but a high percentage of the problems that they see are not organic problems at all, but they are related to stress. The problems of backaches, colds that won't go away, headaches, stomachaches—those can all be signs that you are under an incredible amount of stress.

Stress-induced illness has become the bread and butter of medical practice these days. Whether we are talking about irritable bowel syndrome, or constant fatigue, insomnia, chronic pain that doesn't seem to have an organic source, anxiety, depression, exhaustion, burn-out. You know, your body can only handle so much stress. You can only stay on the treadmill so long. And if the stress in your life is not dealt with in a healthy way, your immune system can malfunction. Doctors say that once your immune system is suppressed, that opens the door to infection, maybe to cancer, and there can be all kinds of cardio-vascular catastrophes – stroke, heart attacks, etc. Life overload is not just mentally or emotionally draining. It is physically making many of you sick.

But I would like to look at some of the other signs of a distracted person from this text. Because it wonderfully describes the overloaded person, Martha. In verse 40, here are the signs:

*But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to help me."*

One of the things that you see as an initial matter by the overly busy person is the tendency toward self-pity. And it comes out here in the NIV with these words "by myself"—she has left me to do the work by myself.

The Greek brings it out even more forcefully by saying, "...me alone, me am left." Me alone, me am left. The essence of self-pity is this sense that I am all alone in this. No one knows the trouble that I have experienced. People have gotten distracted. People whose attention has been diverted and drawn away somehow by the overloaded life and care begin to have this sense of growing isolation from everyone else. I, alone, am undergoing this incredible pressure. No one else has this kind of load on them, of children or job or financial pressure. No one else can understand what we are going through. No one cares.

You know, this is the starting point of something really bad—self pity. It is engendered by overloaded life. But when we fall over the edge, we get into self-pity. Self-pity comes to us as a temptation. It is like a seed. We can open ourselves up so that that seed of self-pity gets planted in our soul and we can water it and nurture it and fertilize it until it becomes a really large and awful plant. As we are going to see, there are all these dimensions to self-pity.

We can receive that thought, “Yes, I have been treated unfairly. Poor me. Nobody understands. I am alone. I am isolated. I am cut-off.” Or when that temptation to think that or to receive that comes your way, to sweep it aside.

Listen, the Bible never minimizes people’s troubles. The approach of the scripture, which is the approach of God, never minimizes somebody’s stress. It never says, “You are not under stress. You have no trouble at all. You are not undergoing severe trials.” It never minimizes or makes fun of some trial.

What the Bible does say is that no matter what you are undergoing by way of stress - your roommate, your job, your studies, your church, your ministry - no matter what you are undergoing by way of load, you have a choice regarding your response. It doesn’t minimize the load. It doesn’t say “There is no load.” What the Bible continually says to the believer in Christ is that “You alone have a choice regarding how you are going to respond to the load that is placed on you.”

You have a choice to turn to God bringing the load with you or the choice to turn away from God. You have the choice to believe that God has a future for you and will open a door for you even though the present circumstances look really bleak. You have a choice to believe that God is for you and will give you wisdom to discover a way out from under the pile. Or you can choose to believe that God has forgotten about you and is going to leave you suffocating.

You have a choice to open up your life to other people and to stay in relationship, or to withdraw, to cut yourself off and to be like Martha, self-pitying, self-centered, self-consumed, self-concerned. This is where it starts, though, for believers. Over and over I have seen it. It always begins with self pity and succumbing to the temptation that “I am alone, no one cares, no one understands. I am alone with my struggle, I am alone with my trial or I am alone in this ministry. I alone am serving God faithfully in this particular ministry.”

That leads to a third problem. The third problem is being critical toward other brothers and sisters for not doing their share.

*Martha was distracted by all the preparations to be made. She came to him and said, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to the work all by myself.”*

She starts with self pity and then she becomes critical of her sister for not helping her out.

This is the next step in the spiral down. We become critical of other Christians. We become cynical towards the church.

“How come other so-called Christians don’t care about relationships like I do?”

“Everyone else is just caught up in their own little world, busy with their own homes. How come they don’t want to relate, to really build deep relationships and friendships like I do? It just seems like everyone is so isolated and so caught up in their own thing.”

Have you ever become really critical of other believers, really cynical about church – about this church or other churches? Cynicism is one of the chief marks of the overloaded life. We live right now in a really cynical world. Everyone looks at things with an eye of suspicion. Cynicism has become hip. It has become the mark of coolness. Just to stand back and judge everything and everyone.

You know who is the most cynical being in the universe? The devil. Nothing is ever good according to the devil. No one is ever really telling the truth. No one is really authentic. No one is the real deal. No one is genuine.

Are there any of you out there who are really cynical people even toward the church? You can elbow the person next to you, if you know that they are the cynical ones. But this cynicism, this criticism, is the second step in the spiral down. In your area of passion, no one else is doing the level of service that you are.

“What’s the matter with these parents? Don’t they care about their own children? They drop them off in children’s ministry and they don’t ever bother to ask, ‘Hey, can I help?’ They are all just takers.”

“How can these people just take and take and never give? Don’t they wonder how we pay the bills around here? I mean do they think that the electricity is free and all this stuff is free? Why won’t they contribute financially?”

“Don’t they care that people are going to hell? Why won’t they share their faith or support world missions?”

Friend, if you have a critical or cynical view of the church or of other Christians, you are in a really bad state, spiritually. You have lost Jesus’ heart for his people. You’ve lost Jesus’ love.

We become isolated and pity ourselves. And then we take it to the next step and become critical of our brothers and sisters. You know, we aren’t supposed to be looking at what our brothers and sisters are doing anyway. We’re not supposed to look sideways. We are supposed to look straight ahead at Jesus. Not any of this “what he’s not doing, what she’s not doing.” You are supposed to focus your attention, if you are a Christian, on Jesus.

I had a very vivid reminder of this, years ago. I had a little Volkswagen that I was driving up the road near where I lived. And I could see up ahead of me that the traffic was slowing down, but there was quite a distance between me and the traffic. Off to the side I noticed this kid was riding a bicycle. He was about 12 or 13 years old. He had a cigarette hanging out of his mouth and he was yelling back at one of his friends. I

looked at him and the thought crossed my mind, “Boy, that kid looks like a real punk. He thinks he is so cool. Here he is smoking a cigarette and cursing.” I am watching this kid and sort of judging him, you know. You know how you do that? You don’t know the kid or this person, but the instant judgments.

I am looking at him to the side and judging him and what I didn’t know was that the traffic in front of me had completely stopped. And so all of a sudden, I turned my head forward and the car in front of me was completely stopped. I immediately ran into the car in front of me and smashed my headlights. I slammed on my brakes and, of course, the kid who is on the bike looks at me, points at me and starts laughing at me, “HaaaaHaaaaHaaa! What a jerk!” It was the worst possible thing. This kid on the bike was making fun of me and his friends were standing on the side and they were laughing at me too. I mean, it was terrible.

But you know, that taught me that we really are not supposed to look sideways at each other and at the level of service that each of us is performing in the church. That is not our business to be critical of one another. Our business is to keep our eyes straight ahead on the Lord and not to say, “God, what about this person? What about that person?”

Self-pity leads to being critical. And when we allow ourselves to get really critical and to judge other people for how they left us, and how they are not helping us, and how they are not serving enough, and why they are not doing what they ought to be doing, that will create a third problem, which is explosive anger.

Now, I want to ask you something, you overly loaded people, you who feel a lot of stress, who feel a lot of pressure. What is the tone of voice that you will use on occasions when you are really stressed? I mean, let’s forget about you or me because we have things under control. Let’s consider Martha. What tone of voice do you think she used when she spoke to the Lord? It says, “Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. And she came to Jesus and asked...”

Now what tone of voice do you think she is using? Do you think she is saying, “Lord, do you care that my sister has left me to do this work by myself? Hey, you know, maybe you could tell her to help me out?” or “Gee, Lord, I really care about my sister and I love her and I just want to relate to her and work side-by-side with her. I miss the closeness of fellowship with my dear sister, Mary. Oh, Jesus, will you release her so that I can be near my sister? I love her so much.”

Or rather, was it with sort of a snarl, you know: “Lord, tell her to help me out. She is just sort of sitting around. Get up. Why don’t you get off your backside?”

Explosive anger.

And those of you who think that you have no problem with over busy-ness, I would ask you to examine whether you have a tendency to blow up? What is your tone of voice



like? Because irritability, or what you call “a little frustration,” is just code talk for anger that is unchecked. And lots of lots of people are probably regularly coming in contact with your anger; the really stressed will leave a trail of bodies in their wake.

Well, now we are really going to spiral down to the fifth thing. The fifth thing is that you become bitter toward the Lord. Self-pity leads to being critical of others and that leads to being really angry. When we are angry, often in our anger and self-pity and all of that, we become really angry at God and we start accusing God of something. And that is found in this statement, “Lord, don’t you care?” “You don’t care God!”

Don’t think you can become critical with other Christians, at your brothers and sisters in the church or at home, critical with your spouse, critical with your children or your parents or your roommate or a home group—I don’t think you can be critical and cynical about Jesus’ church for long without becoming bitter toward God. You know, bitterness: “I am all by myself. I am doing all of this for you, God. I am working my tail off. I have all of this pressure and all of this stuff going on. You’re not answering my prayers or protecting me from others. Honestly, I feel like you don’t even care.”

And you start getting this kind of hard callous that grows over your heart and you say, “I don’t think you care, God, about me or supporting my end. I am here laboring away for you and you don’t care about me at all.”

Oh, that is a dangerous place to be. When a person begins to get really angry and critical of the Lord because they are working so hard. They are out in the salt mines. They are producing. They are ministering. God is not holding up their end. That opens an individual up to all kinds of sins. And I have seen this, brothers and sisters, over and over again. That the minute somebody allows themselves to get bitter and critical toward God, they are just an open door to temptation and demonic attack. Because then the person says, “Well, hey, if God is not going to care about me, if God won’t answer my prayers or meet my needs, then I am not going to care about God, or what he says about the way I should live my life. And I am going to go out there and get my needs met any way I can.”

I have seen pastors and mature Christians get into this incredibly dangerous place of anger with God, where bitterness justifies anything.

I’ve watched former leaders here in this church walk away from their marriage; walk away from their own kids, walk away from church, walk away from Christ, just get so far out there because they allowed bitterness, feeling that they were being ripped off before the Lord, to settle into their hearts.

The book of Hebrews warns us against allowing a root of bitterness to grow up in your heart. It says that it causes trouble and defiles many. I’ve seen the defiling affect of simple bitterness towards other people and towards God. It is such a dangerous place.

Bitterness opened them up, then, to saying, “Well fine, God, you are not going to meet my needs. You are not going to come to me and start touching areas of my emotional life. I am exhausted. I am producing so much. Well, fine. I’ll just focus now totally on my career and making money and forget about the Kingdom. I’ll just go back to school and do my own thing. I will get into some kind of emotional attachment and connectedness with a woman at work or with a friend in my neighborhood. Maybe I will have a little fling, an affair. Maybe I will get into some kind of escapist behavior. Hey, it’s okay, right? Because God is not going to do anything for me, I will start meeting my needs myself.”

And that is where Martha was and that is when she is caught up short by Jesus. Rather than talk to Mary, Jesus speaks to Martha. Totally unexpected. Totally catches her on the blind side and that is what the Lord does with us.

Now, I want you to see how Jesus responds to what he is observing in Martha’s life. Verse 41: *“Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her.”*

Now, he uses the double “Martha, Martha” and throughout the scriptures, the Lord, when he wants to say to someone, “Hey, baby, I need you to listen to this. I want you to hear this. This is urgent,” he uses a double name. “Abraham, Abraham, put the knife down.” “Moses, Moses, come over here.” “Samuel, Samuel, I have something to say to you.” “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat.”

Is Jesus calling your name today? Does any of this apply to you?

Let’s look at the specific content of what Jesus said to one overloaded woman named Martha. He said, *“Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”*

The first thing that Jesus says to the overloaded person is “Your life is a product of your choices.” Mary has **chosen** the better portion. See, the overloaded person always believes that they have no choice regarding the way they are living. That life has just hoisted all of this pressure on them. That they’ve been splashed, if you will, by four 300-pound guys falling on them.

But, friends, mostly the overloaded life is a choice. Jesus is saying, “Martha, no one did this to you. You chose to prepare 14 dishes. I didn’t ask for that. You chose to do it.” Do you see that, friends, in your own life? That you are making choices all the time to say “yes” to one more thing, one more debt, one more person, one more obligation?

Now, it may be that you don’t like the consequences of saying “no.” Maybe you are driven by your perfectionism to totally unrealistic commitment. Maybe you must have

everyone's approval all the time, so you say "yes" all the time. Or you must have one more thing in your house to feel good about yourself, so you say "yes" to more debt, or more purchases. But you are the one who keeps making the choice to say "yes" when you could say "no." If there were a hundred good things for you to do – good church things, good work things, good friendship things, good activities things, good purchases – if there are a hundred good things and you can only do ten to live a sane life, that means you have to say "no" ninety times. And it is hard to say "no."

Let me give you one simple illustration from my own life. I have learned to say "no" to most dinner invitations outside of the circle of my existing relationships and friendships. I realized a number of years ago that I simply could not keep expanding the circle of my friends. That if I was going to say "yes" to old friends, then I couldn't also at the same time say "yes" to a hundred new friends. I can't say "yes" all the time and live a sane life.

Now, there are always some people who won't understand your "no." There are always some situations where you will feel pressured to say "yes." In the short-term it is always easier to say yes, but don't grumble in the long-term if you are miserable because you're under a pile. If you are, it is because you made the choice to be.

You can choose to get out from under the load. You are not simply a passive victim. If debt is a problem, you can choose to cut up your credit cards. Hundreds of people in this church have done that. You can choose to do the same thing.

If excessive TV watching is eating up your time, you can choose to pull the plug on your TV. Marlene and I have done that over the years on numerous occasions. When our kids were growing up, we used to pull the plug on the TV in May and not put it back on until September so that they wouldn't spend the summer in front of the TV.

You can choose to not have the holiday season be insane. If you want to turn everything into a huge production and get angry and self-pitying and critical, that's your choice.

If you are spending your life shuttling your kids from one activity to another, that's your choice. If you won't say "no" to your children, or if something inside of you is driving you because you think that's the successful life, that your kids have to be involved in 11 activities, that's your choice.

You can choose to focus on 1 or at most 2 ministries and say no to other requests. And we need, therefore, to stop whining about it. About how overloaded we are. We choose to live insane lives.

So Jesus says, *"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."*

If you want to begin to live a sane life, you've got to see that you are making choices to live insanelly.

You know, Jesus always loves simplicity. And the way you can recognize the voice of Jesus is that he will almost always speak to you about one thing. The overloaded person, the overly distracted are dealing with hundreds of things and think that God is asking for thousands of decisions and has hundreds of balls up in the air. But with Jesus, he is always saying, "There is one thing that I want to deal with in your life." See, it's not Jesus adding to demands on your life. Jesus gets along by meeting your needs not by loading you with tension. There is always one thing with the Lord. You know, that is the difference between the voice of Jesus and the voice of our own overly-sensitive conscience, or the voice of the experts. We are drawn into hundreds of complicated details. Jesus is always only putting his finger on one sin in our lives. "I want you to deal with this one thing, this one attitude, this one issue." With Jesus it is always a matter of this single focus, this one thing that is necessary.

Well, what is that one thing in your life? Is the Lord putting his finger on one choice that you keep making that keeps you loaded down? What is the one thing, the one issue? Is it your choices about your work? Your hobbies? And he says that there is only one thing that is needed. Actually, the Greek here is "there is only one dish that is really important or necessary." See, I think Martha spread this banquet table out with a dozen dishes to serve the Lord. And Jesus points to the one dish on the table as he said this. You know, to the one meat dish and he says, "Martha, you have lots of things going here, but you know there is only one real main course. There is only one thing on this table that is really important." And then he points to himself.

You see, there is only one that is really necessary. I believe that as we get older, as the years go on, what Jesus is saying here becomes more and more obvious to us. When we are young, we think that we need hundreds of things to make us happy. When we are young we think that we are going to need physical beauty and lots of stuff and we are going to need popularity and we are going to need money. We are going to need relationships. We are going to need all this clutter to make us happy. The older you get and the more you go through different pains and different trials and you lose something along the way or you lose a person, and you don't get the big job and you don't have the big house, or you have a mate that dies, you go through different kinds of trials and struggles and pains, it seems like you realize more and more just through life that what Jesus is saying is really true. That you don't need a lot to be happy. In fact, pain often teaches us that you only really need one thing—deep relationships with people and with Christ.

Let me ask you a question. Is there room in your life for deep relationships? Do you have the breathing space, the room, for deep intimate relationship with Jesus and with other people, other Christians, family, friends? Is there room in your life? What kind of life have you chosen?

Let's pray.

## **Finding Freedom from the Overloaded Life**

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Rich Nathan

November 3-4, 2001

Renewing Your Spiritual Passion Series

Luke 10:38-42

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