

# Overwhelmed: It's Up to Me

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This morning we continue with our series of messages entitled "Overwhelmed." Last Sunday we looked at how our lives are overflowing with activity. We are in a hurry, running behind and stressed out most of the time. Muchness and manyness are the weapons Satan uses to distract us from the things that really matter. God never intended for us to live at a pace that destroys our health, our families and friendships because we are just so busy. God gave us the gift of Sabbath. He wants us to live with a balance between work and rest. He wants us to balance those things that replenish our energy and those things that drain us.

This is a series of messages I'm preaching to myself. I invite you to join me on a journey of making some different choices in 2012 so that we can live life as God intended it. One of our struggles is knowing when to say "Yes" and when to say "No". Jesus told a story about two men who said "Yes" to the wrong thing and one man who said "Yes" to the right thing.

<sup>25</sup> On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" <sup>26</sup> "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" <sup>27</sup> He answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" <sup>28</sup> "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." <sup>29</sup> But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" <sup>30</sup> In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. <sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'" <sup>36</sup> "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" <sup>37</sup> The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Luke 10:25-37

SKIT: SPINNING PLATES

How many plates do you have spinning in your life right now? Which ones are crashing to the ground? Every time we say “Yes” to something, we start another plate spinning. Then we wonder why we are overwhelmed! Our struggle is knowing when to say “No” to another spinning plate and when to say “Yes”. Our struggle is knowing which plates to get rid of. If we don’t limit the number of plates we have spinning in the air, we soon discover the ones that matter most to us are crashing and breaking.

This morning I want us to consider some Biblical principles that will help us learn when to say “Yes” and when to say “No.” Last week I encouraged you to think of one thing you could get rid of and one thing you could do that would replenish you. At our staff meeting last week, Laura James said that she is in the midst of recruiting persons to help in children’s ministry this spring. When she heard me say to choose one thing to get rid of, she was afraid that some of her volunteers would call and quit. Instead she had two new volunteers who said “Yes.” How do we decide which plates to add and which ones to let go?

Why do we have so much trouble saying “No”? I think there are many reasons. One is fear of rejection. If I don’t say “Yes” to you, then you won’t like me anymore. One is a sense of obligation. This person has done so much for me, how can I say no? Some say “Yes” out of a desire to be included or a fear of missing out. It also makes us feel important to be asked. A big reason we don’t say “No” is because we think: “If I don’t do it, it won’t get done.” Another biggie: “If you want something done right, do it yourself.”

Dieter Zander in his leadership seminars tells about a man who was visiting the CEO of a large corporation. While they were talking, a man burst into the office in a frenzy and blurted out a barrage of problems and issues. The CEO looked at him and said, “Bob, remember Rule #6.” The man instantly smiled, and said, “Of course, thanks for reminding me” and left totally calm. In a few moments a woman burst into the room. She was in a frenzy waving her arms frantically. The CEO looked at her and said, “Barbara, you forgot Rule #6.” She responded, “I did. Thank you.” She left calmly. Another guy burst into the room, same scene of panic. “Remember Rule #6.” He also left calmly. Finally the visitor asked the CEO, “What in the world is Rule #6?” The CEO responded, “It is very simple. Rule #6 is: ‘Don’t take yourself so darn seriously.’” The visitor asked, “What are the other rules?” “There are no other rules!”

Many times we say “Yes” to another spinning plate because we take ourselves too darn seriously. We think no one else can do it like we can. We are in good company. Moses struggled with this problem. Moses was called by God to lead the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land—a land flowing with milk and honey. Moses was responsible for overseeing a throng of people estimated from 100,000 to two million on a trek for forty years through the wilderness. Even if you take the low estimate, he had an enormous crowd to take care of. But Moses forgot Rule #6. He took himself too darned seriously. Listen to what happened.

<sup>13</sup> The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. <sup>14</sup> When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, “What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you

from morning till evening?" <sup>15</sup> Moses answered him, "Because the people come to me to seek God's will. <sup>16</sup> Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and laws." <sup>17</sup> Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. <sup>18</sup> You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. <sup>19</sup> Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. <sup>20</sup> Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform. <sup>21</sup> But select capable men from all the people--men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain--and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. <sup>22</sup> Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. <sup>23</sup> If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied." <sup>24</sup> Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. Exodus 18:13-24

"The people come to me. I'm important. I'm the one who decides. I tell them what to do." His father-in-law recognized that Moses needed to know Rule #6. What he was doing was not good for him or the people. He was spinning too many plates. His whole day was spent arbitrating disputes, and people wasted hours waiting for their hearing. Moses needed to quit taking himself so seriously and share the responsibility and the load. He need to hand off some spinning plates.

I struggled with this in growth of LakeRidge UMC. At one time, I did everything—except the music! I attended every meeting. I did every funeral and wedding and event. I had many plates spinning and many crashing. I thought it was up to me. It made me feel important. But the important things in my life were the things crashing to the ground. My time with God was getting squeezed out. My time with family and for replenishment was suffering. It was difficult to accept Rule #6, but I had to let go. When I did, the ministries and impact of LakeRidge UMC grew exponentially. Staff and volunteers were doing things far more

effectively than I did. Many churches never grow beyond 200 members because that is all one pastor can take care of. Pastors who won't let go and share the ministry inhibit their churches from reaching new people with the Good News of Jesus Christ. Rule #6.

What plates do we say "Yes" to and what plates do we say "No" to? To make those decisions we have to determine what are the most important things to us. Then we have to keep those in mind when we are offered a plate. Is this one of my top priorities or is it just another plate? Am I saying "Yes" out of my neediness for approval or to feel important or because this is something really significant?

We say "Yes" to the wrong things, and then we do not have time or energy to say "Yes" to the things that really matter. What are the things most important to you? Relationship with God and serving Him? Relationship with family? Making a difference for God in the world?

Jesus' story about the Good Samaritan provides us with some principles for making these decisions. A man was on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho about 15 miles. He was accosted by thieves; robbed, beaten and left for dead. Along came a priest who sees the man lying beside the road. He passed by on the other side. The scripture does not say why, but I think it was Rule #6. He was important. He perhaps was going to lead worship and to touch a bloody man which would make him unclean, and he would not be allowed to lead worship for days. "My religious duties are more important than saving this man's life." Along comes a Levite. The Levites were the tribe that had been dedicated to assisting

the priests. He was what we would call a lay leader in the church. He crossed on the other side of the road. The scripture does not say why, but I think it was Rule #6. He had important things to do and so he could not say “Yes” to help a dying man. If a preacher and a lay leader would not help this man who would? Along comes a Samaritan who was considered a half-breed. There was open hostility between Jews and Samaritans. Yet he is the one who stops. He remembered Rule #6. He bandaged up the man’s wounds. Put him on his donkey and walked along beside him. Took him to an inn where he took care of him and then paid the inn keeper to take care of him.

Then Jesus asked, “Which of the three was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” Who remembered Rule #6? Who remembered what really mattered? What was really important? How do you think the Good Samaritan felt about his decision? Did he regret it and say, “Wow, I wish I had never done that. I’m so far behind on my schedule, I will never catch up.” Or did he walk away from the inn feeling alive inside because he had chosen to do what really mattered? He took time to make a difference in someone’s life. I wonder how the priest and the Levite felt after performing their religious duties? Did they even give a thought to what they had missed and wondered what happened to this man? Did they have any regrets?

Several business leaders in our community chose the right thing last week. A family traveling through West Texas on their way to North Carolina encountered a snow storm near Colorado City. Their SUV and trailer flipped over. Everyone survived, but they lost everything. Their insurance company

distributed their claim. Bart Reagor and Rick Dykes along with other business leaders took time out their busy schedules to provide clothing, food, a vehicle and funds to enable them to continue their trip to North Carolina. All could have said, "We are too busy". But this was a spinning plate that mattered. They chose to do what mattered to God. Did they have any regrets? Listen to this email I received from Bart: "I have discovered the last few years that God has blessed me in many ways not just so I can have things for me and my family, but because I am expected to be giving and help others in need. There is no amount of money that provides the feeling I got when we were able to help that family get their life in order and turn a chaotic situation around."

Every day we are offered spinning plates. Some of them are significant and important and enable us to serve God effectively. Others are just more activities that will drain us and distract from the things that really matter. Will you take some time this week and write down the five things that are most important to you? Remember to include things that matter to God. When you are offered a spinning plate, will you ask: "Does this help me fulfill the most important things in my life or is it just another activity?" Will you remember Rule #6? It is not all up to you.

Larry sings "Lean on Me".