

Read also Psalm 1. Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

I have this book you might be interested in. The book is for busy people. It's called *The Overload Syndrome*. It was written by a doctor, who is also a professor at a medical school; he's an author, a husband, and a father. He is a public speaker who is requested by hundreds of churches, businesses, management groups, even Congress and the Pentagon. He knows all about stress.

Dr. Swenson found that while so much was good about his life—he served plenty of patients, he ran a successful business which employed several people, he gave encouraging speeches—all that work beyond his job as a doctor was very fulfilling. Why was he having headaches all the time? Why was Linda, his wife, crying all the time? Why was it so hard to get out of bed each morning? His enthusiasm, he writes, had shriveled to the size of a dehydrated pea.

There seemed to be no extra space to do anything.

One afternoon as Linda drove home, she saw neighbors walking hand in hand. She pulled up beside them and learned they were walking to an ice cream parlor. It was two miles away. Two miles each way for Lisa and Steve to hold hands, walk, and talk. Two hours of free time. She drove away envious. She and her husband never had time like that. Their life felt like a pinball machine.¹ Can you relate?

Is this how Jesus handled life? Today we look in on Jesus as he accepts a dinner invitation from friends Mary and Martha. Brenda Everett, come tell us the story. LUKE 10:38-42

Beautiful story. Who do you relate to?

Let's take a survey:

- Do you ever eat supper in your car as you are driving home?
- Is your idea of vacation a trip to the dentist so you can lean back in an easy chair and relax? (at least for a minute!)
- Is your family mad at you because they seem to be your last priority?
- Do you read your Bible and pray every day as long it would take you to fix dinner for Jesus?

You are clearly Marthas!

Today we talk about resetting priorities. This is the beginning of Lent, forty days to set aside time for Jesus. How do we overcome the tyranny of the urgent?

Let's imagine Jesus in the twenty-first century in America. Let's imagine that Galilee is Texas. Bethany, where Mary and Martha live, is Duncanville.

Jesus has been all around the metroplex. He sent out the twelve disciples on mission to the Great Southwest Cities. When they returned, Jesus led them on a retreat out by Joe Pool Lake where he

¹ Richard A. Swenson, *The Overload Syndrome: Learning to Live within Your Limits* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998) p. 12-13.

challenged them to feed five thousand people. He taught, then healed many, and afterward cleaned up the park.

The next day Peter, James, and John hiked up a mountain with Jesus (Is there a mountain in Glenn Heights or Cedar Hill?!) There, He was transfigured before their very eyes. Returning, they saw the other disciples struggling to heal a boy with epilepsy and Jesus stepped in to help them.

They then walked to Duncanville but had some opposition in DeSoto. His disciples almost got in a fight over it but Jesus intervened with a rebuke. They went on to another Greater Southwest city. Busy day; but it didn't seem to stress him out.

From there Jesus sent seventy other followers to every town north of the Trinity River to spread the good news about Him. When they came back they were so excited they could hardly contain themselves. Jesus agreed, *It was a successful trip! Nevertheless, do not rejoice at your power and success, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.* (see Lk 10:20)

If you are a student of the Bible, you realize these activities were from one chapter prior to dinner at Mary and Martha's house.

Then he told some leaders a story about the extent to which you must go to help your neighbor which we call The Good Samaritan. All in a couple of days' work.

This is a great deal of activity. He's not passive. How does He do it? He doesn't seem to be stressed like the doctor and his wife. What's his secret?

In Chapter 9, preceding all this activity I mentioned, it says he went out alone and prayed. And then Chapter 11 right after his visit with the sisters, Jesus again went out to pray. He was extremely active in this world and He felt the need to pray.

From there, they walked on to Duncanville, to the home of friends. Martha saw on Facebook that he was in the vicinity and immediately, she texted him and invited him to dinner.

Now, had it been me, I would have then raced around cleaning my entire house, especially the closets because He might open an unexpected door. I would have begged Dean to go to Tom Thumb and buy the best steaks he could find and then I would have raced to Sears to purchase a new grill, and expected my husband to pick up some propane on the way home.

I would have changed the sheets on the beds, done the laundry, washed the car, and taken a shower.

I would have also begged Dean to make an appetizer, pick up some shrimp to go with the steak, make a salad, wondered what kind of vegetables Jesus would like, and gotten a box of See's Chocolates. Not knowing whether he likes creams or nutty chocolates, I would have bought both.

I can tell you I know exactly how Martha felt! She's stressed out! Have you been there? Have you ever been to dinner at someone's house and they just stay in the kitchen working? They hardly sit down! They are concerned about the outcome.

Mary, on the other hand, was probably the younger sister. She might have been eighteen or nineteen and in college. She did not care whether her closet or her room was clean.

But here's what she did. She read a few passages in her Bible because she had some questions. Here's my chance, she thought to herself. She read about the prophecies of the Messiah; she had heard about the mountain and read up on Moses and Elijah going up on a mountain to meet God. She refreshed her memory so she could ask him, and then she wanted to know how he fed 5,000 people with so little preparation. ☺

She wanted to hear every word because Jesus had the answers to everything. You may not think Jesus has all the answers, but as you spend time with him, freely asking your questions that come up from reading the Bible, you'll find that it begins to unfold.

Martha tried so hard to please and she worried and worried about whether she would get everything done, and it made her distracted. Mary was so pleased He had come she focused on Him to spend every moment with Him.

Which do you relate to?

For the next forty days Jesus is coming to your house. He's constantly busy but a big chunk of that busyness is time to sit and talk to you.

Try going home and setting out a coffee cup and maybe a box of candy and your Bible on the table by your favorite chair. Find a time each day to sit down for twenty minutes. Read a passage of the Bible and simply talk to him about it.

What you gain:

1. Instruction and insight – you have just opened yourself to Someone with the greatest wisdom.
2. Companionship – you are not alone.
3. Power – Jesus has the power to handle whatever you talk about.

Let's not be duty bound and spiritually deprived.

Are you like Dr. Swenson, feeling about as enthusiastic about life as a dehydrated pea? You do not have to be passive—just make a shift in priorities. Have desert with Jesus. Wrestle control of your life away from the tyranny of the urgent and give it to the King.

Let that twenty minutes be a time of rest and refreshment. Jesus would love to visit. You can talk about whatever you want.

AMEN