Anchored Update [72]

Useful or Loved?

What Martha’s busy afternoon shows us about over-functioning and fear

Anchored Verse

But the Lord replied to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered and anxious about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part [that which is to her advantage], which will not be taken away from her.”

— Luke 10:41-42 (AMP) —

When love starts to feel tied to usefulness, it’s easy to say yes to everything and call it devotion. This week, Martha’s story in ***Luke 10*** and Chapter 5 of ***From Survival to Surrender*** help us notice what is really driving our yes, with a Pattern Check from the companion journal to take it further.

by Sean Brannan

Friday, 30 October, 2026

Welcome friend,

Thank you for taking a few minutes to be here with me this week. I'm grateful you keep making room for this.

A Quick Update: This summer R3B Press released my book, ***From Survival to Surrender***, along with a ***companion journal*** that walks through each chapter with guided reflection and practice. Much of what I write in this newsletter grows out of the same questions the book works through: *how fear shapes the way we live, and what it looks like to bring those patterns honestly before God.* This week's reflection leans on Chapter 5, where I write about over-functioning.

Some changes are also coming to how and where this work is shared. What you receive each week will stay the same, and I'll have more to tell you soon.

What Is Driving My Yes?

Recently I found myself angry, restless, and mentally scattered. My first instinct was to fix the feeling and move on. When I slowed down long enough to listen to it, I saw what it was pointing toward: *for a long stretch I had let circumstances and other people's choices set the shape of my days.* I was trying to be faithful to the people and responsibilities I care about, yet somewhere along the way my own life had started to feel postponed. The uncomfortable part was realizing I couldn't place all of that outside myself, because I had been participating in the pattern. So the question I've been sitting with is this: ***what is actually driving my yes?***

A few weeks ago, in ***Carrying What's Mine [69]***, we looked at what happens when we try to carry everything alone and won't let anyone help. This week is the other side of that coin: *saying yes to so much of what other people need that our own life ends up on hold.* ***In From Survival to Surrender***, I call this *over-functioning*. Counselors use the term for someone who consistently takes on more than their share: anticipating needs before they're spoken, managing outcomes, and carrying emotional weight that belongs to someone else. In the book I describe how this often develops when love starts to feel tied to usefulness, so that underneath all the capable helping, the heart is quietly asking, *"Will I still be loved if I stop being useful?"* From the outside, that can look like devotion. On the inside, fear may be doing more of the driving than we realize.

Martha's story in Luke 10 puts that tension in a single afternoon. Jesus is a guest in her home, and she takes on the work of hosting Him, which was a real and generous responsibility. Luke says she was *"distracted"* by it, and the Greek word, ***perispaō***, describes being pulled or

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dragged around in many directions at once. That was the closest description I could find for how I've been feeling. Martha's frustration eventually spills over, and she asks Jesus to tell Mary to get up and help. Notice how Jesus responds:

- He doesn't criticize her hospitality, because serving guests was good work and a real way of loving Him.
- He names what was happening underneath the work: she was worried and upset about many things, pulled in more directions than one person could hold.
- He declines to manage Mary's choice for her, even though Martha asks Him to, and He protects Mary's freedom to sit and listen.

That last point is the one I keep returning to. Over-functioning rarely stays contained to our own effort. Sooner or later it reaches for other people's choices, because if everyone would simply do their part, the anxiety might finally settle. Jesus doesn't give Martha that. He invites her to the one thing that is necessary, which is being with Him, and He trusts her to choose it.

Naming this pattern is an invitation to honesty, and shame has no useful place in it. Christian love really is sacrificial, and faithfulness will sometimes cost us time, comfort, and plans we hoped to keep. The question is whether we're freely offering what love asks of us, or repeatedly neglecting what God has entrusted to us because we're afraid of disappointing someone. In Chapter 7 of the book I wrote, *"We are not responsible for controlling the outcome. We are responsible for obedient trust."* I'm relearning that this week. So I'll leave you with the question I started with: ***what is driving your yes right now?***

Key Takeaways

- Over-functioning can look like devotion from the outside, so it's worth asking whether fear of disappointing someone is driving your yes.
- Jesus didn't rebuke Martha for serving; He named the anxiety underneath it, which means the work itself is rarely the problem.
- Over-functioning tends to reach for control of other people's choices, and Jesus' refusal to manage Mary for Martha shows that love leaves room for others to choose.

> ***We are not responsible for controlling the outcome. We are responsible for obedient trust.***

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Anchored Prayer

Abba,

Thank You for meeting me with patience when I'm pulled in every direction. Like Martha, I can get so busy serving that I miss You in the room. Show me when love is asking me to give, and when fear is asking me to manage what I can't control. Help me leave other people's choices with them and with You. Teach me to sit with You first, and to trust that I'm loved before I'm useful.

Hallelujah. Amen.

My Prayer

Over-functioning rarely stays contained to our own effort. Sooner or later it reaches for other people's choices.

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Anchored Breathwork

Release Breathing (3–2–5) I Don’t Have to Control This

Purpose: To help your body settle when you feel pulled in many directions, so you can notice what is driving you before you say yes to the next thing. This rhythm comes straight from one of the Pause and Breathe moments in ***From Survival to Surrender***.

Posture: Sit with your feet on the floor and let your hands rest open in your lap.

1. **Inhale** through your nose for **3 seconds**.

   Quiet cue: *“I am held…”*

2. **Hold** gently for **2 seconds**.

3. **Exhale** slowly for **5 seconds**.

   Quiet cue: *“…I don’t have to control this.”*

Repeat for 7 cycles.

Pro Tip: If the hold feels uncomfortable, skip it and simply breathe 3 in, 5 out. You don’t have to force anything. You’re creating enough space to notice what fear has been protecting.

Will I still be loved if I stop being useful?

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Anchored Reflection

Martha's question and Jesus' answer can be ours too. Take a few minutes with whichever question fits where you are.

If you're newer to this work: Where do you feel pulled in many directions right now, and which of those pulls have you agreed to out of fear rather than love?

If you've been examining these patterns for a while: Whose choices are you trying to manage so your own anxiety can settle? What would it look like to leave that choice with them and with God?

If you want to go further, Chapter 5 of ***From Survival to Surrender*** walks through over-functioning and the fear of need. The matching chapter in the companion journal includes a Pattern Check where one of the options is simply, *"I over-function, over-give, or stay useful so I feel secure."*

You can find both on Amazon or at R3BPress.com.

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Every newsletter, article, and Anchored Reflection begins with a real question or burden.

If something is pressing on your heart, send it my way. Each week I choose a focus for the newsletter, an article, or a reflection. What you share could be the catalyst for someone else's breakthrough. I would also love your feedback on recent articles.

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