



CHIEF'S FILE CABINET

Ronny J. Coleman

Got Too Much on Your Plate!

I've got too much on my plate. We hear that all the time. However what we don't know is how big that person's plate is. And we don't know what is piled onto that plate. And besides who put all that stuff on that plate!

The answer is pretty simple. We put the stuff on our plate. Just like going to a buffet and we get a chance to walk down a long line we get a sample of this a little bit of that and we continue stacking things on the plate until it starts falling off the edge and then we blame the cook.

There is an engineering analogy to this. I once heard the question asked what do you call the person who thinks the glass of water is only half full. The answer is they are an optimist. What do you call a person who thinks the glass of water is half-empty? The answer is a pessimist. What do you call a person who thinks the glass is the wrong size, an engineer? What do you call the person who wants to get a bigger glass, and entrepreneur?

One day I was having a humorous conversation with an individual about the preverbal cliché of too much on the plate and she responded by saying "anybody knows that if you want to continue to get more food then trade your plate of a bowl, you can stack it higher."

How many of us out there feel that we do have too much to deal with? It seems to be a common if not outright pervasive feeling among a large number of people.

The more important question is what are we going to do about it. You see this is really a question about prioritization and commitment. If you don't eat anything that is on your plate it will continue to remain full.

I have three suggestions for you as to how to eliminate this problem from your life. They are:

- A. Learn how to say no
- B. Finish what you start
- C. Get a new plate before returning to the buffet

My first suggestion everybody has heard about. It consists of just saying no. We have told kids to just say no to drugs. It's one of the most difficult things in the world for people to do. Yet it is a simple procedure.

Once you have reached a level of commitment that becomes overwhelming you have to learn to say no. Not no forever but no for now. One way of looking at this is if we continue to pile commitment after



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commitment upon your hypothetical dinner plate after a while you cannot savor and enjoy the distinctiveness of what you have attempted to consume.

This leads us to point two. Finish what you start. Whenever you make a commitment one of the first things you should be asking yourself is when is this going to be finished. Self imposed deadlines on commitments. Deadlines and closure are the best ways of assuring that the contents of your plate will not spill over.

The last suggestion is to get a new plate. That doesn't mean that you should throw away the empty one but rather that you should have a planning process that allows you to have a clean plate at least once a year. I have spoken extensively on the whole idea of setting goals and objectives and having some kind of a game plan. That's how you clean your plate off. Periodically you might have to go back and say there are certain things that you committed to do in the past that you are not going to continue with in the future. You can't abandon them but rather you do need to appropriately dispense with them. As a person who has changed jobs several times I can tell you that one of the times to clean your plate is when you change what table you are at. Now remember the lessons that you have learned from things that you have committed to do that became difficult for you to sustain. On the other hand there are some things that you might have committed to that you want to go back and keep as part of your life. But make it as a conscious choice not as an accident.

So, there you have it. When we express the complaint that we have too much on our plate we ought to remember that the reason we have a full plate is that we have chosen to do many of these things. If we look at the biblical connotation one of the ways in expressing rejoice is to say "my cup runnith over." Both visually have the same concept yet one is negative and one is positive.

If your plate is full rejoice in the fact that you are at a table where a banquet is being served instead of being impoverished. If you always remember to take care of what is on your plate today and don't take second helpings before you have finished the first ones then perhaps someday you will be able to make the statement "this has been the finest meal of my life!"