

23 When Your Heart Is Overwhelmed

June 16, 2026

I owe you an apology.

I try to get something to you every Sunday at the latest, sometimes it does not always work out.

But this time I missed the last two.

For those of you who follow along regularly – thank you for your patience.

And for those who noticed the silence – you were right to notice.

There've been no articles the last two Sundays because I was living the subject of this one.

To put it plainly, I have been overwhelmed.

My father-in-law passed away recently, and what followed has been the kind of month that doesn't leave room for much else.

There were arrangements to make.

There were people to care for.

There was my step-mother-in-law, who needed help navigating the practical avalanche that follows a loss – the calls, the paperwork, the decisions that keep arriving whether you are ready for them or not.

And in the middle of all of it, I was preparing a message of hope to deliver at the memorial service.

I will not share that message here – it belonged to those people in that moment.

But I will tell you this:

Sometimes the most overwhelming thing is being asked to help others while you yourself are barely standing.

And I did not handle the week perfectly.

I dropped things.

I forgot things.

I stared at a screen and produced nothing.

The intention was there, my heart was in the right place but my brain would not respond.

I went to bed some nights having accomplished far less than I intended and more than I likely realized.

That is what overwhelm actually looks like.

Not dramatic collapse.

Just a quiet erosion of capacity – until the gap between what needs doing and what you can do feels impossible to cross.

You Have Been Here Too

Maybe not this week.

Maybe not for this reason.

But you know this feeling.

The moment when the list stops being a list and becomes something... overwhelming.

When the inbox, the calendar, the obligations, the relationships, the responsibilities – when all of it arrives at once and your brain simply cannot find a place to start.

So you don't.

You freeze.

Or you hustle – moving from thing to thing without finishing anything – which feels like progress but isn't.

Or you sleep more than you should because unconsciousness is the only place nothing is demanding anything from you.

Overwhelm is not weakness.

It is what happens when the load exceeds the capacity.

Any bridge engineer will tell you that a structure is not defective simply because it has a load limit.

Every structure has one.

So do you.

For Some of Us, the Load Limit Arrives Sooner

I want to say something here that I've mentioned in earlier articles in this series.

For those of us who are neurodivergent – ADHD, autism, sensory processing differences and others – overwhelm doesn't just feel harder.

It often *is* harder.

When a neurotypical person is overwhelmed, they may struggle to prioritize.

When a neurodivergent person is overwhelmed, the executive function that *enables* prioritization can shut down almost entirely.

It isn't laziness.

It isn't lack of effort.

It is a neurological reality – the mental traffic control system that most people rely on without thinking about it goes offline precisely when it is needed most.

Tasks that were manageable in isolation become impossible in combination.

The brain that can hyperfocus brilliantly on one thing cannot, under overwhelm, figure out which one thing to start with.

And so nothing gets started.

And the pile grows.

And the shame of the growing pile makes everything harder still.

If that is your experience – if overwhelm hits you faster and harder and recovers more slowly than it seems to for the people around you –

you are not broken.

You are wired differently.

And overwhelm is one of the places that difference shows up most clearly.

What the Castle Does

In my book I write about the castle – the emotional and spiritual fortress we build to protect ourselves from pain.

Overwhelm has its own structures.

The first one most of us reach for is the **drawbridge**.

When everything becomes too much, the instinct is to shut down access.

Stop responding to messages.

Withdraw from conversations.

Pull back from obligations that feel optional.

Raise the drawbridge.

Not from pride or indifference – from sheer depletion.

There is simply nothing left to give, and the drawbridge is the only mechanism you have to stop more from being taken.

I understand that instinct.

I felt it these past weeks.

But here is what I have learned about the drawbridge:

It is a good short-term protection and a dangerous long-term strategy.

Raised long enough, it stops keeping pain out and starts keeping help out.

The people who could carry some of this with you – they can't get in either.

The drawbridge was designed for discernment, not permanent defense.

Then there are the **storerooms**.

Overwhelm loves the storerooms.

When we cannot process what is happening – when there is simply no bandwidth to feel it, examine it, or bring it to God – we pack it away.

We tell ourselves we will deal with it later.

Later, when things settle.

Later, when life slows down.

But later has a way of never arriving.

And what goes into the storerooms does not disappear.

It waits.

It accumulates.

It adds its weight to the next season of overwhelm, and the one after that, until the storerooms are so full that ordinary stress becomes unbearable.

Because it isn't just today's weight you are carrying.

It is everything you didn't put down.

What David Knew

David knew overwhelm.

Not as a concept.

As a lived reality.

He was a king, a warrior, a fugitive, a father, a man chased by enemies and betrayed by people he loved.

And in Psalm 61 he wrote something that has stayed with me for years since the day I found out my father's cancer had returned and my heart truly was overwhelmed:

"Hear my cry, O God; attend to my prayer. From the end of the earth I will cry to You, when my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the rock that is higher than I." (Psalm 61:1-2, NKJV)

Read that again slowly.

When my heart is overwhelmed.

Not "if."

Not "in the rare and unfortunate circumstance that."

When.

David lived overwhelm.

He didn't treat it as a failure of faith.

He didn't apologize for it.

He simply knew – there will be moments when my heart exceeds its own capacity.

And when that happens, I need something higher than myself to stand on.

Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.

That is not a passive prayer.

That is an active request.

David is not asking God to remove the overwhelm.

He is asking God to lead him somewhere he cannot get to on his own.

Somewhere higher.

Somewhere with a foundation that does not shift when everything else does.

He is asking to be led – because overwhelm takes away your ability to find your own way.

That is the most honest thing about being overwhelmed.

You cannot think your way out.

You cannot organize your way out.

You cannot will your way out.

You need to be led.

Permission to Say So

Isaiah 40:29 says: “He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.”

Not the strong.

Not the ones who held it together.

The weary.

There is no spiritual premium on pretending you are fine when you are not.

There is no virtue in performing capacity you do not have.

The same God who preserved David’s raw, unfiltered cry in Scripture – *when my heart is overwhelmed* – is the God who meets you in yours.

You do not have to have it together to come to Him.

You just have to come.

And sometimes – often, actually – the most faithful thing you can do in a season of overwhelm is simply to name it honestly.

To say: I am overwhelmed.

Not as defeat.

As an act of trust.

Because naming it is how you stop carrying it alone.

Who Helped Me

I did not get through these past weeks by having a system.

I did not get through it by being disciplined or organized or spiritually mature.

I got through it one thing at a time.

Sometimes one hour at a time.

I leaned on Dawn and others more than I usually do.

I asked God more than once to lead me to the rock – because I genuinely could not find it on my own.

And slowly – not all at once, not cleanly – things got done.

The message got written.

The slideshow was created.

The arrangements got made.

The people who needed caring for were cared for.

Not because I rose to the occasion.

Because I stayed in it long enough for God to work through it.

There is a difference.

Rising implies strength you summoned.

Staying implies surrender to something stronger than you.

That is what overwhelm teaches, if we let it.

David cried out for a rock higher than himself.

Isaiah tells us who that rock is:

“Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord God is an everlasting Rock.” (Isaiah 26:4, NKJV)

Not a temporary foundation.

Not a rock that holds until the pressure exceeds a certain point.

Everlasting.

And Paul, writing to the Corinthians, makes it unmistakably clear who that rock was all along:

“...and that rock was Christ.” (1 Corinthians 10:4, NKJV)

The Rock David cried out to.

The Rock Isaiah declared everlasting.

That Rock is Christ.

The same Christ who is not surprised by your overwhelm.

Who is not disappointed by your dropped tasks and stared-at screens and weeks where you accomplished less than you intended.

Who meets you not at your best – but at your most depleted.

We are not the rock.

We need the Rock.

And the rock – everlasting, unshaken, higher than anything pressing down on you right now –

is still holding.

If you're struggling:

- Christian Faith-Based Resources: <https://mentalhealthhotline.org/christian-faith-resources/> or call 1-866-903-3787 (24/7)
- Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 988 (call or text)

You matter. Your overwhelm is not weakness. And the rock that is higher than you is not out of reach. Please stay.

William James Meyer is the author of "Do You Live in a Castle? Breaking Free from the Walls That Hold You Hostage." He writes from a Christian perspective as a fellow traveler – someone who spent the past month overwhelmed, imperfect, and still being led.

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