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PERRY NOBLE

**WINNING THE WAR
AGAINST WORRY**

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CONTENTS

4	THE AUTHOR	
5	INTRODUCTION	
6	HOW TO USE THIS STUDY	
8	SESSION 1	SIGNS
26	SESSION 2	PLATES
42	SESSION 3	FLAT TIRE
58	SESSION 4	SCARED
74	SESSION 5	HASHTAG
90	SESSION 6	SUNSCREEN
106	ACTION PLAN	
110	TIPS FOR LEADING A GROUP	

THE AUTHOR



PERRY NOBLE is the founding and senior pastor of NewSpring Church in South Carolina. The church averages more than 32,000 people during weekend services at multiple campuses across the state.

His previous book, *Unleash!* has helped many people learn how to break free from normalcy. His latest book, *Overwhelmed* tells his personal story of his battle with depression and how people can find hope in a world that feels hopeless.

Perry, his wife, Lucretia and their daughter live in Anderson, South Carolina. You can find Perry online at perrynoble.com or on twitter @perrynoble.

INTRODUCTION

All of us experience stress, anxiety, worry, fear, and depression at some point in our lives. But what I discovered when I was neck deep in this battle—including thoughts of ending my life—was that the church has largely remained silent on this issue. In fact, I've heard church leaders declare that someone who's a Christian and in right standing with God will never have such struggles.

That simply isn't true. Scripture is full of examples of godly people who experienced trials, suffering, and overwhelming circumstances.

If your life seems overwhelming to you right now and you don't know what to do or how to handle it, you're not alone. Millions of other people feel trapped in their circumstances and think they can't escape.

So is there a way out of all this? Is it possible to experience emotions like joy and happiness again?

The answer to these questions is yes; however, the journey there isn't quick and easy.

There isn't a formula you can pray or a verse you can memorize that will instantly snap you back into a happy place. But I can tell you from personal experience that there's a way out, and although it will take a lot of time and energy on your part, the journey's worth it.

Today I can honestly say I'm more excited and passionate about life than I've ever been. Don't get me wrong; I still wrestle with being overwhelmed. But I now have a much better perspective on how to deal with difficult circumstances when they come my way.

My prayer is that after this study, you will as well. Are you ready to join me in winning the war against fear, worry, and anxiety? My prayer is that each session will bring you closer to victory—to a place where you're hopeful, not despairing; peaceful, not anxious; and free, not overwhelmed.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Overwhelmed: Winning the War Against Worry is a six-session Bible study. Most groups meet weekly, completing one session a week, but feel free to follow a plan that meets the needs and schedule of the people in your group.

Each session of *Overwhelmed* was designed with two major experiences, each with its own distinct features.

1. Each session opens with a **group experience**, including:

START

This page includes questions to get a conversation started and to introduce the video segment.

WATCH

This page includes a few key points from Perry's teaching and space for you to take notes while watching the video.

RESPOND

This page includes carefully worded questions and statements to help you and your group respond to Perry's teaching and to God's Word.

Tips for leading a group are provided at the back of this Bible study book. Leading a group may feel intimidating, but in addition to the video teaching and suggested questions, this section provides valuable help for leaders to make sure your time studying *Overwhelmed* is a life-changing experience for everyone.

2. Each session includes an **individual experience**, including:

CLOSER LOOK

This section is your personal evaluation. It includes questions designed to help you take a closer look at your life in relation to what was taught and discussed in the group experience. Use these pages to honestly evaluate feelings and experiences on a deeper level.

This is the “What is my current situation?” section.

PERSONAL STUDY

This section is your personal Bible study. It includes selected Scripture passages for reading and a few questions to help you process what you’re reading. These pages guide you to a deeper understanding of the biblical truths taught and discussed in the group experience.

This is the “What does God say?” section.

NEXT STEPS

This section is your personal application. Doing Bible study as an individual and in a group is wonderful, but to experience life change, you have to apply what you’re learning about yourself and about God. These pages have simple yet thoughtful questions to help you take the next steps in winning the war against worry. In Christ you can move from overwhelmed to overcomer.

This is the “What do I do now?” section.

These sections were designed so that they could be completed in a single sitting or at three separate times before the next group experience.

Finally, there’s a brief review for your personal reflection after the final session (“Action Plan,” pp. 106-7). And to go even deeper, read *Overwhelmed: Winning the War Against Worry* by Perry Noble (Tyndale, 2014, ISBN 978-1-4143-6886-3).

SESSION 1

SIGNS

**Welcome everyone to your first session of *Overwhelmed*.
Open your group time with the following activities.**

Take a few minutes for participants to introduce themselves with a quick answer to the following questions.

What's your name, and what do you like to do for fun?

If you had a day all to yourself, how would you spend it?

We rarely, if ever, get a day to do whatever we want. Schedules and responsibilities wake us up in the morning and demand our attention. Life can feel like a battle, constantly fighting against us, stressing us, and pulling us in different directions. Some days it feels as if we've won a small victory just for getting through them; we survived.

Over the next several weeks we'll try to hit pause on our busy schedules, take a deep breath, and discover a better way to live. Peace is possible.

Let's see what Perry shows us first about winning the war against worry.

Use this space to take notes as you watch session 1.

1. *Busy* and *tired* are the words you use to describe yourself most often when people ask you how you are doing.
2. You always seem to be in a hurry!
3. Every time you look at your upcoming schedule, you feel stressed and anxious.
4. You are getting less and less sleep.
5. You always see others as the reason for your problem.
6. You keep saying that what you are going through is a “season” that will eventually pass.
7. You are showing less and less compassion toward others.
8. You are losing hope.
9. You begin to withdraw from family and friends.
10. You can’t remember the last time you genuinely had fun.

This week’s verse to remember:

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

JOHN 10:10

Use these questions to lead a group discussion.

Let's start with the question Perry asked at the end of the video.

How many of the 10 signs do you relate to?

Which ones were the most revealing for you and why?

In the video Perry called John 10:10 one of the most powerful verses in Scripture.

How do Jesus' words in John 10:10 challenge or encourage you?

In the video Perry confessed to accusing his daughter of having his cell phone when it was in his hand the whole time.

When have you ignored an obvious problem in your life? What happened, and how did you finally resolve the issue?

Why do you think so many of us ignore problems instead of dealing with them?

Jesus assures us that we'll face trouble, but He also encourages us to take heart because He's already overcome the world (see John 16:33).

What can you do this week to begin moving from overwhelmed to overcomer?

Use "Closer Look," "Personal Study," and "Next Steps" on the following pages to help you understand and apply the concepts in session 1 before your next group experience.

Sign 5: You always see others as the reason for your problem.

Who is the source of your stress?

Sign 6: You keep saying that what you are going through is a “season” that will eventually pass.

Think about your schedule and responsibilities. How long have you been busy?

When was the last time you weren't busy?

Sign 9: You begin to withdraw from family and friends.

Think about your daily schedule. How much time do you voluntarily spend with family or friends?

Using last week as your starting point, write the names of people you interact with each day, other than an obligation.

Monday:

Tuesday:

Wednesday:

Thursday:

Friday:

Saturday:

Sunday:

Sign 10: You can't remember the last time you genuinely had fun.

What do you enjoy?

How much time do you spend having fun?

When was the last time you had real fun?

If you're experiencing more than half of these warning signs, you're dangerously close to being overwhelmed. Maybe you knew you were overwhelmed but didn't have a way to measure unhealthy tendencies. Maybe you didn't know you were standing on the edge, clueless that you could fall in over your head.

Hopefully, this deeper look at the 10 signs of being overwhelmed will help equip you with your first line of defense in winning the war against worry, because now you've identified the enemy. You know what you're dealing with in the battle for greater peace.

You don't have to be overwhelmed. You can overcome!

Open your Bible and highlight John 16:33.

Pray with that verse in mind, giving any anxiety to God and trading it for the peace of Christ.

PERSONAL STUDY

LIFE TO THE FULL

You've made it through your personal evaluation, taking a closer look at 10 signs that you're overwhelmed (or getting close to it). Now let's examine God's Word. This is a good habit to get into, and it's a pattern we'll follow between your group experiences: answering some questions and then discovering what God's Word has to say to you.

Open your Bible and highlight John 10:10. Write the verse in the space below.

The / in this verse is Jesus.

Circle the word / in the verse above. Next, circle the two words describing what Jesus came to make possible.

Underline the words *thief* and *only*.

Finally, underline the three action words describing the thief's goal in our lives.

Based on this description, why would Jesus identify someone or something contrary to His purpose as a thief?

Jesus said real life, full life, abundant life, now and for eternity, is found only in Him. Anything else is a thief—stealing from your abundance, killing you slowly, and destroying the life God wants to give you. Jesus came to fill you up. A thief leaves you empty.

But don't worry. If you're thinking, *The last thing I want to hear about is a full life. My life is too full already!* then you need to know two things.

1. You may be overwhelmed.
2. That's not what Jesus was talking about. He didn't mean we have to take on more activities. In fact, He was talking to a group of people that included Pharisees, leaders who were big on religious activity but knew nothing about a love relationship with God.

How can your status or activity (even your religious busyness) become a thief, robbing you of the full life Jesus offers?

These religious leaders who opposed Jesus, were more interested in following rules and being in control than in hearing the truth being spoken. They were slaves to a system they had built of checklists and appearances. Busy, controlling, wanting to appear that they had it all together and all figured out. Anything you can relate to?

Read John 10:1-10.

When has stress robbed you of the joy and fullness of life?

What in your life is proving to be a thief, working against your joy and fullness in life? What effect is that having on you?

Chances are, the shepherd image isn't quite as familiar to you as it was to Jesus and His original audience. Being a shepherd was more than just a job; it was an identity and a lifestyle. This was a 24-7 gig. No time off. No bonus pay. Healthy sheep were the reward. Shepherds lived sacrificially, risking their lives to know their sheep, protect and provide for the flock, and lead them all to live healthy lives. Shepherds knew their sheep couldn't care for themselves, so they had to provide what the sheep needed. Although sheep also went astray easily, they readily followed a shepherd, their trusted leader and provider.

Read Psalm 23.

How would you describe a shepherd, according to this psalm?

In what ways are you like a sheep who needs a shepherd?

What hope can Psalm 23 provide when you feel overwhelmed?

Read John 10:7-21.

How did Jesus describe Himself and what He does in the following verses?

Verses 7-11:

Verses 14-18:

Look at the responses to Jesus' story and explanation in verses 19-21. Describe the two responses in your own words.

One group responded to Jesus by ...

Others responded to Jesus by ...

What's your response to Jesus? Wrap up this time of personal study with a quick prayer that expresses your response to Jesus and asks God to help you see the life-changing truth of these verses. (If you've never responded to Jesus in faith, pray about that honestly and talk to someone in your group.)

NEXT STEPS

FOLLOWING HIS VOICE

You've taken a closer look at your life, evaluating the 10 signs that you may be overwhelmed. You've seen what God's Word says about Jesus' desire for your life. The next step has to be a response. What are you going to do now? Let's put all the pieces together.

How would you currently describe your life?

How would you describe Jesus' desire for your life, according to His words in John 10:10?

When Jesus said He came so that you could have life to the full, He didn't mean this abundance is just eternal life in heaven, though that too is possible only through faith in Him. Recognizing His voice, responding to His invitation, and following Him is the only way to experience life to the full right now. Today. Anything else is robbing you of true joy and satisfaction.

Rest—pasture—is right there if you'll just trust Him. Jesus, our Good Shepherd, said:

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

JOHN 10:27-29

What will you do to listen to the Good Shepherd? Be specific.

Like the people responding to Jesus' powerful work and words in John 10, you also have two choices.

Circle your response.

a. I choose to keep doing things my own way, refusing to surrender the appearance of being in control.

b. I choose to consider that Jesus is no ordinary man, and I should listen to what He says, believing He can miraculously change my life too.

Jesus promises rest, peace, pasture for those who know His voice and follow Him.

Describe, in your own words, what a peaceful "pasture" and freedom from worry would look like in your life.

I wouldn't worry about ...

I'd feel free to ...

I'd trust God to ...

Circle the three signs of being overwhelmed that are most significant for you—the areas that need immediate attention.

1. *Busy* and *tired* are the words you use to describe yourself most often when people ask you how you are doing.
2. You always seem to be in a hurry!
3. Every time you look at your upcoming schedule, you feel stressed and anxious.
4. You are getting less and less sleep.
5. You always see others as the reason for your problem.
6. You keep saying that what you are going through is a “season” that will eventually pass.
7. You are showing less and less compassion toward others.
8. You are losing hope.
9. You begin to withdraw from family and friends.
10. You can’t remember the last time you genuinely had fun.

Use the chart on the following page to identify your first steps in dealing with the three warning signs you circled. Then identify adjustments you need to make in your routine to help ensure the success of those practical steps.

To help ensure success in taking that first step, think through the specific actions involved. For example, if you said you were getting less and less sleep, and you committed to getting at least six hours of sleep a night, what time do you need to get up? Do you need to set your alarm? Do you need to be in bed by a certain time? Do you need to be sure a daily task is completed by a certain time so that you can get to bed? Do you need to set your phone to silent during that time? How will your plan affect others? Identify those actions on the chart as well.

MY FIRST STEPS AWAY FROM BEING OVERWHELMED

<p>WARNING SIGN</p>	<p>I'm sleep deprived.</p>			
<p>PRACTICAL STEP</p>	<p>Get at least 6 hrs of sleep.</p>			
<p>TO TAKE THIS STEP, I ALSO NEED TO...</p>	<p>Get up by 6 a.m. Set alarm and put phone on silent while sleeping. Make sure to pack lunch and clean kitchen by 10 p.m. Be in bed by 11 p.m.</p>			
<p>COULD ANYONE HELP YOU, OR WILL THIS STEP AFFECT ANYONE ELSE? WHO AND HOW?</p>	<p>Spouse- be careful not to wake each other in the mornings.</p>			

Pray about the steps you've identified. Ask God to speak clearly to you and to give you faith to follow Him in this journey of abundant life.