

Traveling Light

Alison Hunt

CRC July 11, 2010

BC story of falling down the stairs at the T station – come out on stage dragging all kinds of luggage, bags, etc.

- No one helped me up – thought I broke the glass angel Christmas ornament
- Made it onto the train, felt like an idiot and realized I was crazy for thinking I could carry so much
- Have you ever done this?

Well the truth is I think this is something that we actually do every day.

- As silly as my subway story is, I think it's a picture of how many of us live our lives on a regular basis
- Ok maybe you haven't dragged around this much literal baggage – it's not like we haul suitcases around with us (although some of you moms might disagree with me on that – by the time you get the baby carrier, your purse, the diaper bag, etc etc etc)
- Metaphorically speaking though, between the moment we wake up in the morning and the moment we walk out the door, a lot of us pick up a lot of bags and carry them with us everywhere we go throughout our day
- They're called burdens.
- We think we're fine and we can manage it all – we're strong enough – we don't need any help – we can do it on our own just fine.

- When the fact of the matter is – it takes a lot of work to haul all this stuff around. It's exhausting. It's hard. It's tiring, and then that affects how we treat people around us, which in turn creates more baggage for other people!
- So what's in these bags anyway?

I thought we could talk about them in 4 categories and hopefully this way we'll cover most of them.

Why don't we start with WORK.

- Most likely, all of us here today have had a job at some point in our lives. We've all had bosses, we've all had coworkers, we've all had responsibilities and demands placed on us.
- All of these factors can lead to some challenging situations, especially in these economic times.
- Maybe your boss is unreasonable. (thankfully mine is not – I just want to make that clear – Gee, it's all good!)
- But seriously, maybe you work for someone who makes your life miserable. That's a heavy load to carry around.
- Maybe your coworkers are difficult – maybe there's something going on that's unethical, or maybe there's backstabbing or jealousy about who's climbing the corporate ladder faster
- Or maybe with less employees around now, maybe you're being asked to do an unthinkable amount of work so you spend day after day feeling behind, like you're not good at your job.
- All of these are heavy burdens to carry.
- Maybe you lost your job thanks to the recession and are having a hard time finding something else. Talk about a heavy burden.

- Maybe your job is taking care of your children at home. Raising kids is a wonderful, exhausting, often thankless job which has its own variety of burdens.
- Maybe I didn't hit on the exact situation but you can insert your own deal here. Worry, stress, anxiety. Work burdens are heavy ones and yet for many of us here today they're a reality.

Let's move on to FAMILY.

- This one's a fun one – who doesn't have family drama in their lives?!
- So who hurt whom and how long has it been going on?
- Who's not speaking anymore and why?
- Or maybe your in-laws are unreasonable or your teenager is driving you crazy or you're starting to realize what the 'terrible twos' are all about
- Family burdens are heavy and the hard part is that they're your family – you're stuck with them! 😊
- Unforgiveness, hurt, pride, selfishness – family burdens are heavy ones too
- Maybe there's an illness in your family. All of a sudden everything changes, doesn't it? Your priorities shift and you find yourself carrying the stress of that around, even if you're not aware of it all the time

Maybe we've got PERSONAL burdens that we're carrying around

- Disappointment about something
- School stuff
- Envy or jealousy

- Relationship drama – stuff that's going on now, or wounds from past relationships
- I think this is essentially why we have relationship issues – we bring our baggage into relationships with us and we're so weighed down by our own stuff that it's hard to fully be available to the other person
- And when both people are preoccupied with their burdens (consciously or subconsciously) there's no margin for a healthy relationship
- Weariness, hopelessness, guilt, fear – these burdens can be some of the heaviest

And finally today there are the SPIRITUAL burdens we carry

- Maybe we've got doubts about faith
- Maybe we're mad at God about something that happened that doesn't make sense or isn't fair or we can't explain
- Maybe we're ignoring God because we'd rather live our own lives and make our own decisions
- Maybe we think we've disappointed Him so much that He couldn't possibly love or forgive us
- These burdens are heavy because they carry eternal weight

Ok – everyone take a deep breath – I know this is hard stuff. Some of you probably try not to think about this stuff, maybe you bury it, and here I am dragging it to the surface. But I'm doing so for good reason, so hang in there with me.

- I don't think any of us actually *want* to carry these bags around, but it's easy to get used to them

- The hard part is that we get so used to carrying stuff, that we don't even see that we're doing it anymore
- We can get so weighed down by all the baggage we're carrying that we can't function normally. It's hard for us to get around – physically, emotionally, mentally – we're exhausted, sore from carrying everything. It's hard for us to go anywhere, do anything
- Even more, we don't have room for anything else so that when something else comes along, and something else will always come along, we break down. We don't have any extra hands to carry anything else, we don't have any margin in our lives so we're overwhelmed and unable to handle, to carry, to deal with one more thing.
- So then what happens when a friend needs a hand? We don't have a hand to help.
- This sounds crazy, right?! This can't possibly be healthy.
- I think we spend a lot of time carrying baggage that God never intended for us to carry.
- There's got to be a better way of traveling through life with God, right?!

So let's take a look at what the Bible has to say about us hauling our burdens around.

Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT)

<sup>28</sup> Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will

find rest for your souls.<sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”

1 Peter 5:7

Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. (NLT)

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. (NIV)

Psalm 68:19

Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens.

Selah

Psalm 55:22 (NASB)

Cast your burden upon the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never allow the righteous to be shaken.

See, God knows that we can't handle these things on our own – He knows the weight is too much for us to bear.

- So He invites us to set our bags down, to lay our burdens down, and trust Him.
- He invites us to a life of traveling light.

I know that's easier said than done. Some of this stuff you've been hauling around for years. So what can we do about it? How do we lay our stuff down? How do we travel light?

- It's all about choices – that's the good part and the hard part about this.
- There are three choices I want to talk about today – there are probably more, but these are the ones I want us to focus on today

- It's amazing to think about what our lives would look like if we only chose wisely in these three areas
- I think these three things could open up a new realm of our relationship with God as we learn to travel light

### Choose to surrender

- Jesus says Come to me – he doesn't make us come, it's a choice, it's a voluntary act on our part to surrender
- Now I want to clarify what kind of surrendering I'm talking about here.
- There's the surrender to an enemy after being conquered. That's an unwilling, defeated surrender. That's not what this is about.
- This is the surrender to God where we admit we love Him and need Him and can't do it all on our own so we invite Him into our lives and our situations and we surrender our need to be in control in order to receive His freedom and peace
  - And oh how wonderful it is to surrender our whole selves to the Father!
  - Ultimately, when we're hauling our stuff around we're making a statement to God that we can do this by ourselves so we're going to sit on the throne in this area
  - So let me ask you – who sits on the throne of your heart – is it your seat, or are you willing to surrender that to God? It's your choice.
  - There is freedom in surrendering; there is joy in not having to carry all of your burdens alone.

- And this is an open invitation – Jesus says, come to me, ALL who are weary and carry heavy burdens – I think that pretty much covers all of us, don't you?
- Just think about what life would look like if, when we're faced with problems or burdens, we went straight to Jesus and surrendered them!

The Bible is full of stories of people who chose to surrender to God and then experienced His power in their lives in amazing ways

John 4:46-53

<sup>46</sup>Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. <sup>47</sup>When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.

<sup>48</sup>"Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."

<sup>49</sup>The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

<sup>50</sup>Jesus replied, "You may go. Your son will live."

The man took Jesus at his word and departed. <sup>51</sup>While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. <sup>52</sup>When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour." <sup>53</sup>Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and all his household believed.

- Jesus was in Galilee, this man came from Capernaum. This is about a 20 mile walk.

- This man was a royal official and legally had authority over Jesus. And yet we hear him call Jesus 'Sir' – in effect, surrendering his authority to Jesus in this matter
- He knew his power and position couldn't save his son, so he turned to the One he believed could save a life
- He choose to surrender

The second choice I want us to look at is also found in this story.

We need to choose to trust God

- Again, easier said than done, I know. Ultimately when we're hauling stuff around though we're making a statement that we know what's best in this situation
- If we're still worrying about it, essentially we're not trusting God with it, are we?
- We need to choose to trust that God is fully capable of handling our burdens – that His timing is perfect, that He knows what's best (His ways are higher than our ways...Is. 55:8-9)

In this story, the Bible says *the man took Jesus at his word and departed.*

- Can you imagine? He's asking Jesus to come – hey come walk 20 miles with me and save my child – and Jesus says, it's ok you can go your child will live.
- I don't know about you but I'd have lots of questions at that point! How will this work, will you come later when you finish up here, should I expect you tomorrow – give me some details on how this will work out ok!
- But this man *took Jesus at his word and departed.*

- He chose to trust God.
- Choosing to trust God opens up a whole new realm of our relationship with Him – when we trust Him, we’re open to what *His* plans are for our lives, and we start asking for *His* will to be done rather than just being concerned with our own.
- When we choose to trust, we don’t have all the answers, but we believe in the One who does and we take him at his word
- I think after encountering Jesus, this man was traveling light on his 20 mile journey home. Sure he didn’t have answers, but he surrendered and trusted and went on his way.
- And what happened – he got word that his son was ok and had in fact been healed at the very same time he was speaking to Jesus the previous day!
- Think about what God can do with a heart that is surrendered to Him and trusting of Him? The possibilities are endless!
- And the ripple effect of a life surrendered and trusting of God – *and his whole household believed*
- Choose to surrender, choose to trust God.

The third choice I think hits closest to home. Choose to love.

- You see, some of these bags are personal and hard for us to set down. When we choose to love, we’re choosing to say that whatever the situation, whatever my problem with this person, however mad I’ve been, whatever unforgiveness still lingers, I’m choosing to love and lay it down.
- Choosing to love says that people are more important than my pride.
- Choosing to love means recognizing that it’s not all about me.

- Choosing to love means extending grace when others need it – there’s a lot of stuff that at the end of the day, it’s not really a big deal, so maybe it’s not worth even becoming a bag for you to carry – choosing to love means sometimes not even picking that one up, leave it alone instead.
- Here’s where choosing to love gets awesome - when we’re hauling everything around with us, we don’t have a spare hand to help anyone else.
- There’s this really great verse in the New Testament about helping others carry the load: Galatians 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
- Hello! We’re supposed to be helping each other out, but in order to do that we must have a free hand to help.
- See how this works? When we choose to surrender, when we choose to trust God – when we’re traveling light – *then* we have our hands free to choose to love and help others carry their load.

There’s a second part to my subway story... after I confessed my stupidity to God in thinking this was a good idea, I asked Him to send someone to help me. I had to switch lines to get onto a train that of stairs to catch another train.

- The guy who helped me had a spare hand to help – he was traveling light – and he chose to love.
- When we’re not preoccupied with our own stuff, we’re able to see others who might need help – and we’ve got a free hand to be able to do something about it.

The ultimate example of choosing to love of course is Jesus himself.

- In the final hours before his capture, which he knew would lead to his death, he prayed the most phenomenal heartfelt prayer to the Father.
- Matthew 26:39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”
- His heart was surrendered, he trusted God and His plan, and he chose to love in the most extravagant witness of love the world has ever known.
- Jesus had no baggage, the burdens he did carry we see him take to the Father, while fully surrendered to him and trusting of his will.
- And then in love he chose to take on the burdens of all humanity and he gave his life in order that we might live in freedom

So let me ask you – are you living in that freedom today? Or are you having a hard time under the weight of all you’re carrying?

- Jesus says, Come all you who are weary and carry heavy burdens and I will give you rest.
- Choose to surrender, Choose to trust God, Choose to love.

Psalm 55:22 (NASB)

Cast your burden upon the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never allow the righteous to be shaken.

Where are you this morning? What are you carrying today? Jesus says, Come. The youth band is going to come now and sing a song while we

have time to pray and reflect and lay our burdens down. The front is open if you'd like to come forward or you can pray from your seat.

- Song: Amazing Grace/My Chains Are Gone

If you'd like to go further with this topic, check out Max Lucado's book called *Traveling Light* – he goes into wonderful specifics.

You may find yourself picking up your bags again tomorrow out of habit. That's ok, just lay them back down again. This may be a daily act of consciously letting things go while you learn to travel light.

Let's pray.