

# *My Main Event*

I take the first plate out of my box and name it Allison, after my 10-year-old daughter. It is delicate china, ornate, and barely used. I set it atop the wooden dowel and give a gentle spin, holding my breath for fear it will twirl out of control and come crashing to the floor. As it gathers momentum, it balances and begins to turn more evenly. So I pick up another. This one is an Andrew—a rustic, 14-year-old metal camp plate that requires a firm hand and the occasional powerful swat.

My Michael plate is a strong, durable stoneware—a real no-nonsense dish befitting a stalwart husband. This one is easier to balance but requires more effort to keep in rotation.

Then up goes Mother's crystal platter. This is easy. I look with satisfaction at the growing semi-circle of humming

plates. The music in my head makes my feet tap. I can do this, I think to myself, picking up the Maggie and Jennifer friendship saucers. Steady the pole with one hand, apply a few rhythmic swipes with the other. Counterclockwise. Always counterclockwise. Step over to give a quick, encouraging brush for Allison, a swat for Andrew, a caress for Michael...Let's see, what's next?

There's a silver plate for the in-laws, and a chipped bowl for my out-of-work brother Matt, who always needs *something*. Spin, spin, spin. I check over my shoulder to see Allison wobbling. I hop over without breaking the rhythm and get it back up to speed. Then I quickly brush each plate as I move back around the arc to the end. I can do this.

I look into the box. I've barely made a dent. There are numerous plastic plates: one for volunteering, another for church, another for scouts. A bead of sweat begins to form on my brow as I hastily fling them into position and then rush to make my rounds. I give the Michael plate a quick pat, promising more meaningful attention on the next go-around.

And then, oh, heavens, not the WORK plate! I wrestle the giant, lead tray from the box. It takes all my strength but I wield it masterfully onto the largest pole, and with a herculean grunt, I get it revolving in a slow and steady twirl.

The rhythm changes. My Work plate seems to need twice as much attention as the others, but I can manage. I CAN MANAGE! I develop a pattern: spin two; rush back to Work; spin two more. As I dance, I adapt to the changing tune and its quickening pace, and, feeling confident,



add the Medical Appointments, Ballet Class, Housework, and, for Pete's sake, even Pets.

Finally I reach the bottom of the box. It's a simple plate marked "Jesus," and I set this one effortlessly on its perch. It seems to spin itself, for which I am extremely grateful. I want to stay and gaze at it in wonder, but my duties tug and whine behind me. The moment I look away from the Jesus plate all of the others seem to start wobbling at once. I try to remember the foot-tapping song, but I can't seem to find it. Andrew drops with a clatter, suffering a small dent that I push out gently and I set the plate back in orbit. Guilt washes over me because Andrew is no longer perfect.

The music seems to be intensifying, like a calliope spinning out of control. Darting in a manic fashion from one plate to the next, I suddenly realize I'm not having fun. I'm tired. I'm sad. I'm overwhelmed. Still I run, back and forth, criss-crossing the circle. I let the Friend plates drop. I simply cannot watch them all.

The Michael plate slows and I notice cracks forming on its rough surface. With tears in my eyes, I try desperately to mend it while it spins, but I can't give it the time it needs. The other plates are tilting. I can't even recognize my Allison and Andrew plates in the blur of activity. My heart sobs with despair, and I know I cannot continue. I cry out to God in anguish. I am crushed.

And then I see it.

My Jesus plate has stopped moving. I can't remember the last time I touched it. By rights, it should be lying on the floor in a million pieces. But it isn't. It's sitting, perfectly balanced and unmoving, atop a stationary pole. I can't help but stop moving as well, mesmerized by some strange sense of peace emanating from this plate. What could possibly be keeping it up?

Without turning to look, I know that Jesus is here with me. I feel his hands on my shoulders as he turns me to face him. How long has it been since I felt His touch? He leads me to the still pole, removes the plate, and places it into my hands, smiling.

"This is the only one you need," he says. "Focus on this one only. The rest of these you can give to me. Trust me; I can manage them for you."

I watch intently as He walks around my circle, collecting each plate from its post. The entire stack—all my worries, cares, and responsibilities—fits neatly in the palm of his hands.

He asks gently, "Whoever said they needed to spin anyway? That plan didn't come from me."

Well, now, I think, I have no idea. It seemed to come naturally.

So I sit, for what seems like the first time in ages, and we just talk. We talk about Michael, Allison and Andrew, and discuss ways to make work lighter. Gradually, the peace returns to my soul, and the joyful music washes over me again. I go to sleep that night determined to worry about my plates no longer. They are being well cared for, as am I.