Course 8, Session 4 Student Notes: Raise Your Floor, Simplify Your System

One Thing Is Needful

Big Idea: Complexity does not scale, simplicity does. You grow not by adding more, but by simplifying down to the few things that actually work, and doing them with excellence.

How to use these notes. These are yours to study on your own, before or after the session. Read each section slowly. Under every principle there is a **Notes** space to write what stands out to you, and a **Reflect** question to answer honestly in writing. Keep your Bible nearby. Take about 30 minutes, and end in prayer. Bring your notes and questions to the group. Last session you raised your floor by telling the truth and quitting the wrong things. This session raises it further, by clearing away the clutter, so that what remains can grow.

Open in Prayer

Before you begin, pray this simple prayer, or your own: “Father, I am often busy and troubled about many things. Show me the one thing that is needful. Give me the courage to simplify, to cut the good so I can pour myself into the best, and to build something clean enough to grow. Amen.”

The Scripture for This Session

Read these slowly, out loud if you can:

- **Luke 10:41 to 42**, “And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”
- **Matthew 6:33**, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”
- **Luke 10:38 to 42** (the whole story of Martha and Mary, which we study below).

Reflect: Right now, how many different things is your work trying to do at once? Does your day feel focused, or scattered? Be honest about how it actually feels.

The Big Picture

There is a quiet assumption underneath most stalled businesses and tired ministries. The assumption is that growth comes from addition. If sales are flat, add another offer. If one channel is slow, start three more. If the calendar has a gap, fill it. More offers, more projects, more activity, more, more, more. And the strange thing is that all of this adding usually makes growth harder, not easier, because every new thing is a tax on your focus and your energy.

Scaling runs the other direction. You grow not by piling on but by stripping down, by finding the few things that truly drive results and pouring your strength into those, done with excellence. Less, but better. This session sits inside the “raise your floor” part of the Frame, Floor, Focus framework, and it is one of the most freeing truths in the whole course. You are probably not doing too little. You are almost certainly doing too much. Read these four principles, write your notes, and let God show you what to lay down so that what matters can finally grow.

Principle 1: Complexity Is the Enemy of Scale.

Every extra offer, every extra channel, every extra process is a small tax. One tax is nothing. A hundred tiny taxes will bleed a business dry. When your work is spread across many products, many platforms, and many half finished projects, your attention is divided into slivers, and nothing gets the focus it needs to become excellent. Complexity feels like progress because it feels busy, but it quietly steals the very thing scaling requires, which is concentrated effort on the things that work.

Think of a garden. A gardener who plants forty different crops in a small plot, none of them tended well, will harvest almost nothing. The gardener who plants three crops and tends them with care will feed a family. Your work is the same. The more scattered it is, the weaker each part becomes. Simplicity is not a lack of ambition. It is the discipline that makes big ambition actually reachable, because it concentrates your strength instead of splitting it.

Reflect: Where is complexity quietly taxing you? List the offers, channels, or projects that are splitting your attention right now.

Notes:

Principle 2: Busy Is Not the Same as Productive.

Martha was busy. She was “cumbered about much serving,” working hard, doing many genuinely good things, and she was also stressed and resentful. Jesus did not praise her busyness. He gently told her she was “careful and troubled about many things” and had missed the one thing needful. That is a sobering word for anyone who measures their worth by how full their day was.

You can be exhausted at the end of a week and still have moved nothing forward, because effort spent on the wrong things is not the same as progress. A lot of what fills our days is motion without traction. The question is not “was I busy today,” the question is “did I do the thing that actually mattered.” Learning to tell the difference between activity and productivity is one of the most important shifts you can make, and it starts by being willing to admit that some of your busyness is a way of avoiding the harder, more focused work that would really move the needle.

Reflect: What busy activity have you been treating as productivity? What is the harder, more focused work you may be avoiding by staying busy?

Notes:

Principle 3: Simplify by Subtraction.

We are trained to solve problems by adding. Simplifying means learning to solve them by removing. Take everything your work currently does and hold each piece up to one blunt question: does this drive the goal, or does it just fill the day? The things that only fill the day, even the pleasant ones, even the ones you are proud of, are candidates to be cut or paused.

This is hard, because subtraction feels like loss. Cutting an offer feels like giving up. Pausing a project you started feels like admitting defeat. But every good thing you subtract frees energy for the essential thing, and the essential thing is where growth actually lives. Jesus told Martha the “good part” was the thing Mary chose, and it would “not be taken away from her.” Choosing the good part almost always means letting several lesser goods go. Simplifying is not neglect. It is stewardship of a limited amount of attention, spent on purpose.

Reflect: Of everything your work does, what is the one thing that most drives your real goal? What are two or three lesser things you could subtract to protect it?

Notes:

Principle 4: A Simple System Can Be Repeated, Taught, and Grown.

Here is the practical reason simplicity matters for scaling, not just for sanity. A complex system lives in your head. Nobody else can run it, because it is a tangle of exceptions and special cases only you understand. The moment you try to add a person, a helper, a partner, a team member, the complexity breaks, because you cannot hand off what you cannot explain.

A simple system is different. When your work is stripped down to a clear, few step path, you can write it down, teach it to someone else, and watch them run it too. That is what makes growth possible. Scaling is not just you doing more, it is the work being done by more hands, at the same standard, and that only happens when the system is simple enough to be repeated. So simplicity is not merely tidy, it is the doorway to multiplication. The clearer and cleaner your core process, the more people can carry it, and the further the good you do can travel.

Reflect: Could you hand your core process to a new person and have them run it well? If not, what makes it too complex to teach, and how could you simplify it?

Notes:

The Story: One Thing Is Needful (Luke 10:38 to 42)

Read the passage slowly. Jesus comes to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomes Him into her house. Her sister Mary sits at Jesus' feet and listens to His words. Martha, meanwhile, is "cumbered about much serving," rushing, preparing, doing all the good and necessary work of hospitality, and she is carrying it alone. Finally she comes to Jesus, frustrated, and says, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me."

Notice how gently and how firmly Jesus answers. He does not scold her for serving, but He does correct her focus. "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Martha's problem was not laziness, it was the opposite. She had let many good things crowd out the one needful thing. Her system was complex, exhausting, and resentful, and it had pulled her away from the very presence she was serving. Most of us are far more like Martha than we would like to admit. We are troubled about many things while the one needful thing waits quietly in the corner. Scaling asks us to make Mary's choice on purpose, to simplify down to the good part and refuse to let the many lesser things steal it.

Reflect: In your own work, where are you a Martha, busy and troubled about many things while missing the one needful thing? What is that one needful thing for you?

Notes:

Put It Into Practice

1. Map it, then cut it. On a sheet of paper, list everything your business or ministry currently does. Every offer, every channel, every recurring activity and project. Leave nothing off. Then circle the few that clearly drive your real results. Finally, put a line through several that you could cut or pause without losing what matters.

The few things that truly drive results:

The things I could cut or pause:

2. This week's assignment. Eliminate or pause one nonessential thing, and take the time it frees and pour it into your single most essential one. Then write one sentence about what became possible when you stopped splitting your attention.

The one thing I will cut or pause this week:

What became possible when I did:

Go Deeper (Optional)

- **Read:** *The E-Myth Revisited* by Michael Gerber, on building a simple system that works without you having to hold every piece.
- **Listen:** the *EntreLeadership Podcast*, any episode on focus, systems, or simplifying operations.
- **Study:** Luke 10:38 to 42; Matthew 6:33; Ecclesiastes 4:6 (better a handful with quietness than both hands full with travail).

Close in Prayer

"Father, forgive me for being so often careful and troubled about many things. I have measured my days by how busy they were and missed the one needful thing. Give me the wisdom to see what actually matters, and the courage to lay down the many good things that are crowding it out. Teach me to simplify, to do less but better, and to build something clean and clear enough to grow beyond my own two hands. Help me, like Mary, to choose the good part that will not be taken away. In Jesus' name, Amen."

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