

“One Thing Needful”

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"... but one thing is needed. Mary has chosen the best part; it will not be taken away from her."

Read Luke 10:38-42 (RSV): *"Now as they went on their way, he entered a village; and a woman named Martha received him into her house. (39) And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. (40) But Martha was distracted with much serving; and she went to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.' (41) But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; (42) one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her.'"*

Consider. Are you like Mary, listening to Jesus' word and receiving his guidance? Are you like Martha, gifted in serving others, but becoming overly busy and anxious? What is the one thing needful?

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1. Martha welcomed Jesus as a guest into her home



Martha Welcomes Jesus as a Guest into Her Home

Luke 10:38 tells us that when Jesus and his disciples were traveling to Jerusalem, Martha welcomed him as a guest into her home. Martha was the "mistress of the house," the head of the household (Ref. 1, Ref. 2). The Greek word translated as "welcomed" or "received" in Luke 10:38 means that Martha was personally responsible for seeing to Jesus' needs while he was under her roof (HELPS word-studies – Ref. 3).

2. Mary chose to sit at Jesus feet and was listening to him

Mary, too, was eager to give Jesus a fitting reception. Luke 10:39-40 and 42 tell us that she left Martha in making preparations and instead chose [*decided, made a deliberate choice*] to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to his word (Ref. 4). In the ancient world, sitting at a teacher's feet -- literally and figuratively -- was the posture of disciples or learners (2 Kings 4:38, Luke 8:35, Acts 22:3, Ref. 5). By her action, Mary showed that she was willing to receive Jesus' word and give up herself to the guidance of Christ -- the one thing needful (Ref. 6).

3. Martha was distracted with much serving

Luke 10:40 tells us that Martha was "distracted with much serving." Note that "serving" [Greek word *diakonia* - ministry - Ref. 7] is one of the "gifts of grace" that the Apostle Paul mentions in Romans 12:6-8. Martha was gifted at serving others (John 12:1-2). However, in Luke 10:40-41 Martha became so "distracted" [literally *drawn away*] by the many tasks
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she was doing that she was *drawn away* from listening to Jesus and his word (Ref. 8).

4. Jesus tenderly reproved Martha for being anxious about many things

Martha asked Jesus to reprove Mary for leaving Martha to do the serving alone (Luke 10:40). Instead, Jesus instead tenderly reproved Martha, saying, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things" (Luke 10:41). Jesus did not reprove Martha for her hospitality or her gift of serving. However, Jesus did gently reprove Martha for being anxious [*worried, divided, figuratively "going to pieces"*] and troubled [*disturbed, agitated*] about many things (Ref. 9, Ref. 10).

5. Jesus commended Mary for choosing the one thing needful

Jesus commended Mary for choosing the good portion, the one thing needful. Mary chose to give undivided devotion to Jesus -- to listen to his word and to give herself to his guidance (Ref. 6).

Apply. Make time each day for the one thing needful -- Give undivided devotional time to Jesus. Listen to Jesus' word. Pray. Receive Jesus' guidance and follow his priorities for the things you will do to serve others each day.

Related Lesson

"Cast All Your Anxiety on Him" -- 1 Peter 5:7

(References next page)

References

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