

Too Busy to Love

A good thing becomes a bad thing when it robs you of the best thing. In your life, you might have some very good things, things which God has given you, but they are dangerously close, or perhaps already are, robbing you of the best thing.

It is possible for you to be so busy in your life, busy with work, busy with family, busy with church, that you actually miss out on the most important thing. And what is the most important thing? Jesus told us in Mark 12:30 "And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This *is* the first commandment.

Did you know that good things such as Christian service, being busy for God, even evangelism and discipleship, working hard at your job, earning a living and can become bad things in the Christian life. How so? Well, God repeatedly warns His people about allowing activity, busyness to crowd out their relationship with Him. Perhaps you are a person who finds himself or herself seemingly always busy, endless church activity and service, endless work deadlines, endless commitments - but God still seems far from you.

Well, in that case, God's Word has something to say to you in Luke 10:38-42

Here we have an interesting scene. Jesus is invited to the house of a lady named Martha. Martha, being a good and hospitable hostess, runs around trying to get everything ready and preparing things. Her sister Mary, though, simply sits at Jesus' feet and listens to His Word. No doubt Martha was getting increasingly frustrated doing all this work and seeing, in her eyes, her lazy sister just sitting there with Jesus. Finally, she explodes, blaming 2 people: Jesus and Mary. "Lord, don't you care that while I'm doing all this hard work, Mary's just sitting there! You're condoning it, Lord! Tell her to come help me!"

Jesus' response is not what we'd expect. He doesn't send Mary off; He in fact tells Martha that she has the problem, and Mary has done the right thing.

Now right at the outset, I want to say two things. Firstly, both Martha and Mary loved Jesus. But Mary made the right choice, Martha didn't. Secondly, what Martha was doing wasn't unnecessary. It did need to be done. But she gave it the wrong priority. What she was doing was a good thing. But it had robbed her of the best thing, and so had become a bad thing.

I. You are like Martha When You Think That *Activity* Is A Substitute For *Adoration*

Martha is like so many Christians today. So long as I'm busy for God, I'm OK. As long as my life is active for God, all else is in place." Martha couldn't see that though she was active *for* God, she was not active *with* God. She was very busy for Him, but she was not, like Mary, adoring Him. Martha thought that her primary task was to be busy with some

service. To her, activity was a substitute for adoration. To her, just sitting at Jesus' feet , listening and loving seemed impractical. She had to be busy for God.

That's like so many of us. We are 'doing' people. We want to be busy for God. But pretty soon, our busyness begins to cram out the most important things in our lives, spending intimate time with God. As new believers, we love to spend time with Him. But as we get older, we get used to postponing our time of prayer and Bible study. We say, "Well, I know I didn't pray today, but I go to church. I may not have read my Bible, but I do good service for God"

Activity becomes our substitute for adoration.

Remember the Church at Ephesus? Their activity without adoration caused Christ to say , "Repent".

Working for God without love is serious enough for us to have to repent of our loveless service. Jesus is not satisfied with activity done in His name but not done 'as unto Him' , with Him as the motive. Israel thought they could continue to bring their sacrifices to God even if their hearts were far from Him. But He condemned this attitude in Isaiah 29:13: "Therefore the LORD said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men" (Isa 29:13).

It's like a man who one day comes home to his wife and says, "You know, I no longer love you. I don't feel the slightest amount of desire or passion for you anymore. However, I want you to know, that I will continue to live here, provide an income, and meet all the financial obligations." Would we expect gratitude from the wife? She could rightfully be grieved over such an attitude.

David said in Psalm 51:16-17: "For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give *it*; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart; These, O God, You will not despise."

When we make activity a substitute for adoration , we actually demean God. We act like He has needs which we are meeting at our own expense. "I will not take a bull from your house, *Nor* goats out of your folds. For every beast of the forest *is* Mine, *And* the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the mountains, And the wild beasts of the field *are* Mine. "If I were hungry, I would not tell you; For the world *is* Mine, and all its fullness. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, Or drink the blood of goats?"(Psa 50:9-13)

God is not a contractor who desperately needs workers. That's why motive matters. If you are busy, doing good things, like working, serving God, and it does not come from a desire to know and love and please God, it just becomes a substitute.

I Corinthians 3:10-15 tells us that we will stand before the Judgment Seat Of Christ where our works for Him will be judged. Works that stand the test will be like gold, silver and precious stones. Works that don't will be like wood, hay and stubble. I believe God will judge us on two things, our **motive** and our **material**. *Material* is **what** you did for Christ, *motive* is **why**. Wouldn't it be a tragedy if God showed you your life , all your

hard work in your career, all your providing for your family, all your work done for Him regarding evangelism and teaching others and then, brought out your heart? Inside your heart was selfishness, self-interest, careerism, materialism and other idols. How sad Jesus' face will be if then that great work of your life will not stand the test of fire because of a lack of love. Martha had allowed herself to fall into this trap.

Notice the results: Martha was feeling increasing pressure, because she had her priorities out of order. Once you take Christ out of the centre, life seems to be more complicated, more complex, more demanding. There is anxiety, panic attacks, continual worry. Furthermore, with herself at the centre, she was growing in frustration, people weren't doing things her way, Mary wasn't helping. She's becoming critical and angry with others. She wants to lash out and blame others, Mary isn't helping and eventually she reasons, Jesus isn't helping either.

It's a sure sign that you are becoming like Martha when you begin arguing with God that He isn't helping you serve Him. I'm trying to do all this for you God, and You're not helping very much. Mary, though, was different.

II. You're Like Mary When You See *Adoration* as Your *Primary Activity*

Martha was 'cumbered' about with her 'much serving'. She was distracted and divided. But Mary decided she was going to sit at Jesus' feet. For her, the most primary of all activities was adoration. All else was secondary.

Jesus tells Martha that Mary 'chose'. See, Mary was not a lazy person who refused work. Nor was she this particularly 'devotional personality'. Sometimes people like to blame this all on personality. You know, I'm a Martha kind of person, I'm always busy, I have to be doing. So and so is like Mary, they are a quiet, listening, contemplative type of person. When you say that, you are absolving yourself of responsibility. You are saying, I am not responsible, this is how I am. It is like having brown eyes, or being short or tall. It is how I am.

No, Jesus Himself revealed why Mary did what she did, and it wasn't her personality.

He says "Mary has chosen". She weighed up her options and correctly decided that her priority was to love Jesus. Jesus commended her decision. He said she had chosen the 'good part', which shall not be taken away from her. To spend time loving God is to choose correctly. It is a wise choice with eternal repercussions that no man can take away from you. To spend time with God will count a billion years from now. A lot of our activity won't count at all even 1 year from now.

Notice also Jesus says, **One thing is needful**. The word *needful* in the original means priority, main idea. There is really only one main priority in life, that's our walk with God. All else will fall into place when we get our relationship with God right. Loving Him is the priority. That lines up with Jesus' statement that the greatest of all the commands is 'to love God with all your heart, soul and mind'. Likewise Jesus told the church at Ephesus that they must return to 'the first works'. Loving Him is first and the most important. Adoration is the primary activity!

Realise also that loving God will not divide your love, it will multiply it. When you get your love for God right, your love for your neighbour will follow. We often get the cart before the horse, that's why we struggle so to love others. Some will say, "Well, if we all just sit at Jesus' feet, nothing will get done". Well, here's the thing, you can serve God without loving Him, but you can never love God without serving Him. Love Him, and your service will follow.

There is nothing more practical than spending time in the presence of God. Every character in the Bible who spent extended periods of time with God ended up impacting their world in extremely practical ways: Enoch, Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, and the Son of God Himself, Jesus. Did you ever consider how much time Jesus, who was God in the flesh, spent with His Father in private prayer and meditation? If He, being 100% God and 100% man, felt an intense need to pray, what pride is controlling us to avoid just fellowshiping with Him?

Revelation 3:20 is often applied to an unbeliever "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me". But its actual context is written to a church. Believers can end up becoming so self-assured, self-sufficient, that Jesus is left outside. Graciously, He knocks to come back in. We say, "I have no time." Do you have time to eat? To clean? The fact is, we fit into our day whatever we see as a necessity.

There is the story of the man who pictured his life as a house where Jesus moved in. Each room represented some part of His life. The lounge was the most special, for there Jesus said, "I will meet you here every day, for fellowship". At first the man loved going there early in the morning to just talk with Jesus. But as his life filled up, he found himself cutting off his time with Jesus. Pretty soon, he was popping his head into the lounge and saying, "Sorry, Lord, I can't make it today. I'll make up for it later". Eventually, he wasn't even doing that. Years later, he was rushing off to work one day when he saw the lounge door ajar. He opened it up and there was Jesus, sitting. He said, "Lord, what are you doing here?" It began to dawn on him. "Lord, you've been here every morning, haven't you?" Jesus replied, "My child, I told you, I would meet you here everyday to fellowship with you. I've been waiting. I still am."

See, sitting at Jesus feet involves humility. Pride can keep busy indefinitely, and it has the excuse that all is well, a busy person is surely well, healthy and doing the right thing, right? It's something else to just sit at Jesus' feet each day. That is saying, Lord, I don't know everything, I need to learn from you. Lord, I cannot handle anything, I need you. I must rely on you totally. Humility, admitting you need God, submitting to His Lordship.

You may say, I am too busy.

Joseph Carroll, in his book, *How to Worship Jesus Christ* speaks of a woman who showed him hospitality during a conference. She was the mother of seven children, a helper in the family business, and a wife to a very unsympathetic husband. On top of that,

she was being hospitable to him, a travelling preacher. One morning, around five 'o'clock, he saw light filtering through the door. He opened it very quietly, and saw the woman kneeling by her piano. He quietly closed the door. The next morning the same thing happened, and the next morning the same thing. So, he asked her. "What time do you rise to seek the Lord?" She replied, "Oh, that is not my decision. I made a choice long ago that when he wanted to have fellowship with me I was available. There are times when He calls me at five; there are times when He calls at six. And on occasion, He will call about two o'clock in the morning, I think, just to test me." Always she would get up, go to her piano stool, and worship her Lord.

I asked, "How long do you stay?"

"Oh, that is up to Him. When He tells me to go back to bed, I go back. If He doesn't want me to sleep, I simply stay up."

She was the epitome of serenity. With seven children, she was busy, but not troubled. She had made a choice. She had allowed God to remove her idols, and was wholly His. She was therefore determined and surrendered to be before God in solitude and silence every day.

Are you a Martha or a Mary? Are you a Martha, so busy that you are distracted from the one thing that is needful? You're becoming anxious, troubled, critical of others, frustrated, with no joy. Do you see activity as a substitute for adoration? Maybe you need to humble yourself, admit that your calling is to love, and be loved, and join Mary at His feet.

People don't drift into being a Mary. People drift into being Marthas.

Be a Mary, see adoration as your primary activity. Our calling is to love. One thing is needful, which you must choose, and it will not be taken away from you.