

A HOLISTIC COMMUNITY

Delivered at Central Baptist Church on January 22, 2017 by Pastor Steven Edelman

LUKE 10:38 *“³⁸ Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed 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 up 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 **but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.**”*

If you were to ask your kids what is the one thing that you could change about your relationship, what would they say? I surveyed many of our youth years ago so that I could use the results for a parenting seminar. Most of the teenagers were sitting right beside their parents. I asked from the front, “Parents, what do you think they said?” You could see the tension building in the room as parents gave their kids the “look” and whispers of, “you better not have or what did you say?” In the tension, multiple youth began to sink down in their seats. All the secret sins came out... and I put them up on the screen for everyone to see... No, I didn’t. Every single teenager said the same thing. They said, **“I wish my parents spent more time with me.”** As those words entered the room, the tension turned into tears. Some parents said, “I just realized how distracted I am.” Others said, “I am just so busy and lost in many tasks. Tasks that keep me from enjoying and connecting with my kids.” They may even be good things. It’s that true for many of us. We can easily get lost in work, researching that next purchase, our personal time, the next sports game, the next episode of our favorite show, or an important task list.

Those words “I wish you spent more time with me” ring in the back of my head as I parent my kids because I often get lost behind the next thing. **I often wonder if God feels the same way when we get lost in our busyness and neglect to spend time with Him and others.** What keeps you from spending time with Jesus and others?

To begin with today, we want to look at how we can encounter Jesus in a meaningful way. In a way that causes us to evaluate how we use the minutes of our day. Then I want to move towards the role of community, and specifically the need for a holistic community for our spiritual growth.

At the beginning of chapter 10, we read that Jesus sent out seventy-two people in groups of two on a mission. The mission Jesus gave them was to spread the gospel. After this adventure, we get to hear the story of Mary and Martha. In verse 38 we read, *“Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.”* **“They”** would be defined as the disciples in the context of the passage after all the ministry they did together. Jesus is welcomed into Mary and Martha’s home after doing ministry. Some initial observations:

- Notice that Jesus had a diverse group of friends.
- Both single friends (Mary and Martha)
- and married friends (many of the disciples.)
- He invested in them and they invested in Him.
- Jesus and the disciples were busy doing ministry and stopped.
- Jesus was welcomed into the home of Mary and Martha.

Mary and Martha offered their love and hospitality to Jesus. However, the perspective of the two sisters exposes a conflict that brings to the surface a big question. A question of priorities. Two sisters are perceiving what the priority is, so they can do what is best.

Many of us have heard this story countless times, but let’s try and look at things freshly, and even considering our own current routines and priorities. The first conclusion I would draw from this passage would be: to grow in our relationship with Jesus, we need to stop hiding behind busyness.

- 1. To grow in our relationship with Jesus, we need to stop hiding behind busyness.**

THE PERSPECTIVE OF MARTHA

Martha is the first born. She is the driver. She owns the to-do list. She is the personality that comes home with chore lists, puts the shoes away and starts cutting up a carrot for dinner.

How many of you have a sibling or spouse who is different than you? How many of you have a sibling or spouse that you have had a conflict with? Okay? You can appreciate the challenge given to Jesus. He hears Martha say, "Hey Mary, I need some help over here!" When Mary doesn't respond... Martha gets all worked up. In verse 40 it says, "*And she went up 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 but one thing is necessary.'*"

If my little brother didn't respond, the storm of big brother would hit him. My instinct is to jump into the scene and protest. Why? Because I can empathize with Martha. Martha is performing a good and needed task. Someone needs to prepare the food so we can eat. She could use a little help! Is Jesus even being realistic? Jesus' direct response cuts to the issue. Martha is worried and consumed by what others are doing.

Jesus does not criticize the task, but her worry, which is likely birthed from judgement, jealousy and the need to control and THIS is keeping her from what is best.

a) Worry keeps us from spiritual growth.

You are worried and upset about many things. Martha was too easily distracted by less important things. Compare John 6:25; 1 Cor 7:32–35. "Part of Martha's problem was that she worried too much about what others were doing. Ultimately worry chokes out what Jesus wants to say to us (Luke 8:14)." Worry has an overwhelming grip that keeps us from growing in our relationship with God. It keeps our mind busy. Busy thinking about the wrong thing. Thinking about what others should or shouldn't be doing. What others think about us. It takes over. We often spend too much time assessing the integrity of others and too little time being self-critical about our own actions for Jesus. A community will suffocate when all its energy is spent worrying about others roles. Some of the people who are gifted with details can get "worried, upset, anxious, troubled, fussing, worked up over every stain, every school project, every dirty sink, every surprise guest, every surge of responsibility becomes a cause for great panic. We are all very busy, but not with what matters." (Kevin DeYoung)

Dale Carnegie says, "**Our fatigue is often caused not by work, but by worry, frustration, and resentment.**"

Paul said it well in Phil 4:6–7 "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Worry will control our decisions. At times, it keeps us from connecting with God and others. Worry keeps us busy. Worry keeps us from spiritual growth. To grow in our relationship with Jesus, we need to pause and give Him our attention.

b) Distraction keeps us from spiritual growth.

The most important word in this passage is "**distracted**" in verse 40. The word distracted in the Greek means "to be drawn away." What Martha was doing isn't outright sinful. It's not like she on her phone, watching kittens on YouTube or scrolling on Facebook. She was serving, just as the Bible says (Rom. 12:7; 1 Pet. 4:11). We desperately need people with great work ethic. We need servants. Marthas. Someone has to prepare meals, do the dishes, fix the computer, take out the garbage and stack the chairs. Hard work, sacrifice or suffering is not the problem. Martha is distracted from what is better. She is focused only on her work. She's so busy with the presentation that she ignores the person. What keeps you neglecting the most important thing?

How many times have we been drawn away from what is better?

Kevin Deyoung says, "If someone recorded your life for a week and then showed it to a group of strangers, what would they guess is the "good portion" in your life? What would they conclude is the

one thing you must get done every day? Folding the laundry? Cleaning the house? Catching up on e-mails? Posting to Facebook? Mowing the lawn? Watching the game? I know you have things to do. I have plenty to do myself. But out of all the concerns in our lives, can we honestly say and show that sitting at the feet of Jesus is the one thing that is necessary? No doubt some Christians need to be shaken out of their lethargy and need to get busy for the kingdom. But many Christians are too busy already. **Busyness does not mean you are a faithful or fruitful Christian. It only means you are busy, just like everyone else.**” Kevin DeYoung.

We just accept busy, excuse busy and hide behind busy. This passage demands that we evaluate it. Why do you do what you do? Where does your time go?

Tim Keller said it well, **“If anything becomes more fundamental than God to your happiness, meaning in life, and identity, then it is an idol.”**

As we have been talking about, a lack of priorities keeps us from the very thing we need. To grow in our relationship with Jesus, we need to stop hiding behind tasks that keep us from Him. Secondly, to grow in our relationship with Jesus, we need to make Him our primary focus.

2. To grow in our relationship with Jesus, we need to make Him our primary focus.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF MARY

In Luke 10:42 Jesus says, “But only one thing is needed.” There is a need to focus on what is most important. The “one” thing is the response of Jesus because we tend to do everything else first. Although serving is good, sitting at Jesus’ feet is best.

a) Jesus needs to be our priority.

Mary makes Jesus her primary focus. She is willing to sit at the feet of Jesus and talk with him as His disciple. There is something calming in what Mary does. In the middle of the hustle and bustle of life, we need to pause and give God our full attention. Mary has chosen a needful thing. A good thing. A life-giving thing. **“Discipleship sometimes requires that tasks be suspended while fellowship is maintained.”** (Bock, D. L.) **What tasks need to be suspended so you can grow spiritually? “It is a great temptation to serve at the expense of being fed spiritually.”** (D.L. Bock.) This is the message of Jesus. Some things can wait. **The only thing more valuable than doing ministry is being ministered to.** “We will choose busyness over blessing. It’s not wrong to be tired. It’s not wrong to feel overwhelmed. It’s not wrong to go through seasons of complete chaos. What is wrong—and heartbreakingly foolish and wonderfully avoidable—is to live a life with more craziness than we want because we have less time with Jesus than we need.” (Kevin DeYoung.) **“In his book *The Power of Habit*, Charles Duhigg argues that people usually change bad habits most effectively by focusing on only one pattern, or what Duhigg calls a “keystone habit.”** What he is saying is If you have **one** habit that you need to develop, concentrate on cultivating that one specific habit, instead of on the thousand areas that make up our busy lives. If we do so we are more likely to be successful, not just in that one area but in many other areas. **Time with Jesus needs to be our “keystone habit.”** We need to develop and weave intentional rhythms whereby one observes who He is, listens to Him, and lets Him change us. What are some natural rhythms in which you can do something that helps you grow spiritually? It could be as simple as, pouring a cup of coffee and opening your bible. Maybe, as you are commuting to work you spend some time in prayer and personal worship. It could be listening to a devotional or sermon as you drive. Regularly attending a scheduled Community Group so you can be sharpened, challenged and experience growth from others.

ILLUSTRATION: Coins and time

What should our priorities be?

b) Focusing on Jesus leads us to encountering Him.

Mary has chosen the good portion. The good portion translated to the greatest possession. This gift is a closeness with God. We are sharing and delighting in the joy that He gives us when we enjoy time with Him. There are multiple OT passages that refer to God being the “good portion.” (cf. Ps. 16:5; 27:4; 73:26; 119:57; 142:5; also Josh. 18:7).

When we sit at the feet of Jesus, we will grow more like him; we grow in patience, in love, and in our ability to think like him. Our screens will not satisfy us. Not like a close relationship with our savior.

Busyness keeps us from experiencing a joyful relationship with Jesus. He feeds the soul. He is more important than tending to the physical. I don't mean become a monk and spend every moment in prayer. But are you choosing the good portion? Are you encountering Jesus or are you hiding behind or getting lost your busyness? As we have seen, focusing on Jesus leads us to the good portion. Lastly, to grow in our relationship with Jesus we need time with each other.

3. To grow in our relationship with Jesus, we need time with each other.

Notice that Jesus had friends. You and I need friends. Jesus is regularly spending time with His disciples in community. We see many examples of this in the life of Jesus and now with Mary and Martha. Jesus made this a regular rhythm. When we spend time sharpening each other we grow spiritually. We need each other for accountability.

a) Accountability leads us to spiritual growth.

The church is like a family. A family could have someone who annoys you. We irritate one another with our differences. And that's what happens with Mary and Martha. Martha is annoyed by Mary because Mary is different than Martha. Not wrong. Just different. When we spend time together we can experience conflict. If we deal with conflict properly it leads to spiritual growth. Without conflict, there is no growth. Conflict is not always a bad thing. Brad Lomenick says, **"We impress people through our strengths, but we truly connect with people through our weaknesses and areas of struggle."** Notice that Jesus calls out Martha. He cuts right to the motive and heart of Martha even though she wasn't doing something overtly wrong. Jesus helped her grow spiritually by pointing out an area of weakness. We need each other to help us with our blind spots. It's so important to pause the busy and make room for each other.

We see the disciples in relationship with Jesus through the gospels. He stays at their houses, he's friends with them, he loves them, he talks with them, he cares for them, they care for him. These are friends who spend time together. These are friends who are doing life and ministry together.

b) Participation in a holistic community is necessary for spiritual growth.

Discipleship is positioning others for spiritual growth. There is power in a gathering of people and it shapes you much more deeply. You encounter Jesus differently when you are together, then when you are alone.

For this reason, we need to meet regularly. We want to change the DNA of what a Community Group is so that it positions us for growth. We don't want to fence it in but take a more holistic approach.

The three components of a holistic community include:

TRUTH

HOW DO WE LEARN AND UNDERSTAND TRUTH TOGETHER?

Biblical truth is the foundation for everything we do. As we study the Word of God, it not only gives us knowledge, but also changes our heart when we live it out. As we are personally and collectively changed by the truth of the gospel, we begin to participate in gospel renewal in our community.

Each community group will have different needs, interests, and dynamics. A CG leader can determine in collaboration with the group what will help the majority grow spiritually

together.

FOUR WAYS A COMMUNITY GROUP CAN STUDY TRUTH:

SERMON BASED | Q&A and deeper Bible study.

TRADITIONAL BIBLE STUDY | Leader led.

BOOK STUDY | Gospel and Life by Tim Keller.

VIDEO TEACHING | Right Now Media.

LOVE

HOW DO WE LOVE EACH OTHER AND OUR COMMUNITY?

We communicate the gospel through love. This means caring for and serving others in our Community Group and beyond. It's about serving in and out of the church walls. It's also loving those in the neighborhood where you are planted.

THREE WAYS WE CAN EXPRESS CHRISTIAN LOVE:

TIME SPENT | Relationships take time.

EATING TOGETHER | Keep it simple.

ACTS OF SERVICE | What excites your group?

WE WOULD LIKE EVERY COMMUNITY GROUP TO FIND A WAY TO SERVE INDIVIDUALLY OR COLLECTIVELY A COUPLE TIMES A YEAR.

Love is the foundation of the expression of the gospel. Mark 12:30-31: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

WE SERVE - WE BELONG!

MISSION

HOW DO WE LIVE LIFE TOGETHER ON MISSION WITH GOSPEL INTENTIONALITY?

Everyone has some kind of everyday routine. We all eat, rest, play, and celebrate. We all have basic activities and routines like:

DAILY ROUTINES: travelling to work, eating meals, doing chores, spending time with our family, and exercising.

WEEKLY ROUTINES: grocery shopping, watching a movie or favourite TV program, attending a child's sports game or performance.

MONTHLY ROUTINES: gardening, paying bills, going to movies, dining out at a restaurant, going on dates.

Now, with each activity listed above, think about whether or not you could add:

A COMMUNITY component | Involve a member from your Community Group.

AN INTENTIONAL component | Involve an unbeliever.

A GOSPEL component | Talk about Jesus

The key word is participation if we want to grow spiritually and make a difference in our city. Some of us are just plain lost in busyness. To participate, you can no longer hide behind busyness. You may be lost in doing good things. You can't hide when you participate in community. Your community sees you and you see them. **What keeps you from spending time with Jesus and others? Have you chosen the good portion? Or will you continue to be busy?**

Closing Observations:

What happened as the Seventy-two gathered and scattered?

The Return of the Seventy-Two

Luke 10:17-10 says, "The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" ¹⁸ And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹ Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. ²⁰ Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

As a response, you may need to:

- 1. Evaluate your schedule so you grow in your relationships.**
- 2. Join a Community Group.**
- 3. Facilitate a Community Group.**

"Changed lives are at the heart of the vision. All other aspects of group life — including social interaction, compassion for one another, and Bible discussion — contribute to an atmosphere for transformation but are never sufficient in themselves. Transformation takes place in the heart, resulting in attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors becoming like those of the Master, Jesus." Greg Bowman.