

GOD'S HOUSE OF PRAYER IS A HOUSE OF ONE THING

HOUSE OF PRAYER SERIES #07 • J.S. BOEGL

I. THE STORY OF MARY AND MARTHA (Luke 10:38-42)

Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also SAT AT JESUS' FEET AND HEARD HIS WORD. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But ONE THING IS NEEDED, and MARY HAS CHOSEN THAT GOOD PART, which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38-42)

- A. It was Martha who **welcomed Jesus in her house.** (v.38)
- B. Luke emphasized that Mary sat at Jesus' feet to hear His Word (Luke 10:39). Mary is mentioned on three occasions in Scripture. Each time the Spirit highlights her as **sitting at the feet of Jesus** (Luke 10:39; John 11:32; 12:3; Matthew 26:6-13; and Mark 14:3-9).
- C. Jesus' statement isn't a commendation directed to Mary. It's a correction directed to a busy and distracted Martha. The Lord knows that it's our busy and distracted spirit that needs His admonition.
- D. Jesus does not correct Martha until she begins to complain about what Mary is and isn't doing. When our excessive busyness comes to a boil, we impose it, and it's inordinate, carnal values on others - even those who are receiving life from the Lord.
- E. In the way His statement about Mary is phrased, Jesus is steering all readers throughout history into several essential, eternal truths:
 1. Jesus is warning us of an incessant busyness that will argue us out of finding/establishing a place at His feet.
 - a.) Jesus' warning to Martha is the same warning He issues in Matthew 13:22. ***Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.***
 - b.) It is unsettling that so many Christians attempt to rescue Martha, when Jesus holds out no word of blessing for her in this story. He alone knows how many Christians have fallen away in boredom, distraction, cold-heartedness, and tragically failed to enter into their destiny simply because they allowed busyness to keep them from **sitting at His feet.**
 - c.) The point isn't to condemn Martha. The point is for us to see how deeply the Lord values our sitting at His feet and identifying those very common/similar things that keep us from entering into the ONE THING.
 - d.) It's essential that when we engage this section of scripture that we *get beyond* defending Martha. We can't let our defense of Martha keep us from actually engaging the deep wisdom and blessing that comes entering into doing what Mary is doing.
 2. Jesus declares that **sitting at His feet** is the **one thing that is needful.** Jesus settled the issue of how important this heart posture and lifestyle is. There is no substitute for **sitting at Jesus' feet.** What is gained there is vital to our life in Christ, and can be gained in no other way.
 3. Jesus affirms that Mary **has chosen** this posture (10:42). We must choose it also. No one can choose it for us. Cultivating a heart of extravagant devotion to Jesus requires intentional personal effort.
 - a.) Jesus holds out no value in merely not being busy. Mary was commended for making the choice to do the intentional work of actually sitting at Jesus' feet.
 - b.) This is also why the wise virgins could not transfer their oil to the foolish virgins. ***And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'*** (Matthew 25:6-11)

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4. Jesus honored the wisdom and power of Mary's choice by calling it **good**. It was **good** that ***the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps***. (Matthew 25:4) What was cultivated in their investment in sitting at Jesus' feet enabled them to confidently and joyfully engage the advance and the arrival of the Bridegroom. (See 1 John 3:1-3)
5. Conversely, it was what saved them from being shut out from eternal fellowship with the Bridegroom! Without sitting at Jesus' feet, even we (Bible-believing Christians) will not survive the Matthew 25:6 hour of the **"midnight cry"**.
6. Jesus prophesied that Mary's heart of devotion **would not be taken away from her** (10:42). Grace for a lifestyle of extravagant devotion may be sustained throughout our life if we choose to ask for it. At the judgment seat of Christ, Mary's life will be rewarded.
...each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. (1 Corinthians 3:14)

II. THE ONE THING DYNAMIC OCCURS IN MANY OTHER BIBLICAL CONTEXTS:

- A. Mary's One Thing was also the One Thing of King David
"One thing I have desired of the Lord, this I shall seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life; to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple." (Psalm 27:4-5)
- B. Engaging in the One Thing is what distinguished the wise from the foolish virgins in Matthew 25:1-13
- C. The book of **"The Revelation of Jesus Christ"** was disclosed to John the Apostle by him engaging in the One Thing reality.
I am the ALPHA AND OMEGA, the BEGINNING AND THE END," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, THE ALMIGHTY." I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lamp-stands, and in the midst of the seven lamp-stands ONE LIKE THE SON OF MAN, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I AM THE FIRST AND THE LAST. I AM HE WHO LIVES, AND WAS DEAD, and behold, I AM ALIVE FOREVERMORE. Amen. And I HAVE THE KEYS OF HADES AND DEATH. (Revelation 1:8, 12-19)
- D. Engaging the One Thing was Moses' great request in Exodus 33.
Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You... So the Lord said to Moses, 'I will also do this thing that you ave spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name. And he (Moses) said, 'Please show me Your glory.' (Exodus 33:13, 17-18)
- E. God prepared Joshua, the son of Nun to lead the people of God to take the promised land by engaging God in the One Thing.
So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant, Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle. (Exodus 33:11)
- F. God cultivated the burning and shining lamp of John the Baptist's spirit in the desert engaging the One Thing.
**"John answered, saying to all, 'I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'" (Luke 3:16)
"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of Whom I said, 'After me comes a Man Who is preferred before me, for He was before me. (John 1:29,30)**

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- G. The Father, introduced Peter, James and John to the One Thing, by revealing His own Son to them on the mount of transfiguration.
Jesus was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. (Mark 9:2,3 • See Mark 9:2-10)
- H. When Jewish men pray the *sh'mah* each day, they are engaging the One Thing
Hear O Israel! The Lord our God, He is One. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. (Deuteronomy 6:4) (See also Mark 12:29)
- I. The cry of the mature Apostle Paul in Philippians 3:10 was the cry of One Thing.
O, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. (Philippians 3:10)
- J. The One Thing was Jesus' own daily example. It was how He perpetually lived before the Father.
Then Jesus answered and said to them, 'Most assuredly I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does...' (John 5:19-20)

III. WHAT ARE THE ACTUAL DYNAMICS OF DOING THE ONE THING?

- A. We withdraw from other good things, things that would distract us, in order to intentionally focus on Jesus. Fasting is a type of this focused withdrawal and intentional giving. There is no value in merely withdrawing from anything, without also intentionally giving ourselves to Him.
- B. We engage in the worshipful atmosphere of heaven. This atmosphere is extremely enhanced by entering into His presence through Godly music.
- C. We take up the Bible and engage the Man, Christ Jesus, by pray-reading the Spirit-breathed Word of God. As Kirk Bennet observes, "*We see a Man looking back at us through every page of the Bible.*"
- D. As we read and pray, we further intensify our focus on the beauty of Jesus, given to us through the revelation(s) of the Holy Spirit.
- E. We listen for the Spirit's voice and dialogue with Him in "love" and "truth". (Ephesians 4:15) asking questions, listening, adoring and/or journaling His (John 16:13,15) declarations from the Word.

IV. WHAT BENEFITS ARE DERIVED FROM CULTIVATING A LIFE OF DOING ONE THING?

When Jesus declares, "***One thing is needed. Mary has chosen the good part***" (Luke 10:42) He's saying that when we turn our attention to Him, when we sit at His feet and listen to His Words, many other *life-giving* realities are set into motion. Here are 20 good things that happen when we put "one thing" first.

A. When we sit at Jesus' feet WE PARTICIPATE IN WHAT'S HAPPENING IN HEAVEN. As we behold His beauty, revel in His wisdom and humble ourselves before His majesty, we actually participate in bringing the glorious atmosphere of heaven to earth in a tangible way. ***And Jesus said to (Nathanael), "Most assuredly I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."*** (John 1:51)

B. As we focus ourselves on receiving revelation of Him WE ARE TRANSFORMED INTO HIS LIKENESS. ***We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*** (2 Corinthians 3:18) The more we dialogue with another person, the more we begin to take on the qualities of that person. As we gaze upon Jesus, and listen to His voice, our hearts, spirits, minds and even our physical countenance become conformed to His beautiful image.

C. As we sit at Jesus' feet THE HOLY SPIRIT (our Teacher) SPEAKS THE very QUALITIES OF JESUS INTO OUR PERSON. ***When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears he will speak and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.*** (John 16:13 & 15) This is one of the most exciting dynamics in all of the Kingdom. What happens to to a mortal heart when the eternal Lord of all creation, Who

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looked into nothing and spoke the universe into existence, looks into our soul and declares “Christ”!? This is the stuff of our unsearchable quantum and exponential God!

D. A lifestyle of One Thing prayer, worship & devotional dialogue is what PRODUCES THE ESSENTIAL OIL of (Matthew 25:1-11). This oil is the fuel of our intimacy with the resurrected Jewish Man, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus tells us: ***the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*** It is wise “buy oil” today so that our hearts can be sustained in faithful love to Him through the storms of life and the encroaching rage and darkness that is overtaking us all at the end of this age.

E. When we sit at Jesus' feet with a focused gaze, WE FULFILL JESUS' PRAYER; HIS YEARNING DESIRE FOR ALL OF HIS DISCIPLES. I love being the Father's answer to Jesus' prayers. ***Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me...*** (John 17:24)

F. As we gaze on the beauty of Who Jesus is WE ARE FILLED WITH A ZEALOUS DESIRE FOR HIM TO REIGN in our circumstances: This burning desire becomes the cry: ***“Your Kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”*** (Matthew 6:10) Consequently, doing the ONE THING actually *matures* our prayers so that our prayers move from a *fix-it* mentality to a *we long to see Jesus reign* mentality.

ONE THING I have desired of the Lord, this I shall seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life; to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock. (Psalm 27:4,5) In Psalm 27, David extols three more blessings that comes from being a person who engages God in the ONE THING dynamic.

G. People who *dwell in the house of the Lord* - ***BEHOLD THE BEAUTY OF THE LORD.*** Our hearts were created to thrill at beauty. The Creator of all beauty calls each of us to behold, to look deeply into, and be fascinated by His limitless, inexhaustible, unfathomable beauty. How immeasurable are the blessings that come from beholding the endless beauty of the uncreated God? ***Your lovingkindness, O Lord, extends to the heavens, and Your faithfulness reaches to the skies. Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; Your judgments are like a great deep. How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; and You give them to drink of the river of Your delights. For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light.*** (Psalm 36:7-10)

H. People who *dwell in the house of the Lord* - ***INQUIRE IN HIS TEMPLE.*** They ask the type of questions of the Lord that produce within them a deep wisdom and personal strength. ***O, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man.*** (Ephesians 3:16)

I. People who *dwell in the house of the Lord* - ***WILL BE HIDDEN IN THE SECRET PLACE of His tabernacle; high upon a rock, in the time of trouble.*** Engaging in One Thing will cultivate an interior dynamic that will keep us strong and secure through harmful, worldly influences that have the capacity to *trouble* our mind, our spirit and our physical being.

J. As we sit at the feet of the Lamb of God, WE'RE FILLED WITH EVANGELISTIC ZEAL to both pray and compel others into knowing this Man. We're filled with unction to intercede for the church & our community *and* we're filled with zeal to tell others about the wonders of Jesus that we've been beholding. ***That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled... we bear witness and declare to you.*** (1 John 1:1,2)

K. Jesus sat at the feet of the Father, and listened for His voice in prayer. This was the priority of Jesus' lifestyle. As we give ourselves to the same, WE ARE FOLLOWING JESUS' OWN EXAMPLE, and we give ourselves to the dynamic that will cause us to become more and more like Jesus Christ. Here we learn much more than *what would Jesus* do. We behold Him, Himself: His ways, His thoughts, His values, His inclinations, His emotions and the feel and the fabric of His extraordinary character. ***Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.*** (John 5:19)

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L. Engaging in ONE THING is how the spirit of Daniel 11:32 ***The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits*** (See also 2 Peter 1:2-3) is produced in the human heart. As we engage God in intimate dialogue, WE KNOW HIM, and WE LEARN TO KNOW THE POWER OF HIS VOICE. Through prayer and dialogue with God our capacity to trust Him, and do great things along with Him is significantly increased. Prayer and worship are how we gain the strength to daily heed Jesus' call to take up our cross.

M. Engaging in ONE THING, BREAKS THROUGH THE NATURAL HARDNESS OF HEART, and spiritual dullness that so easily overtakes the human spirit in this age. ***Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed... But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear.*** (Matthew 13:15)

N. When we engage in the ONE THING, WE ARE BEHOLDING OUR EXCEEDING GREAT REWARD. The Lord told Abraham, ***Abraham, I Am your exceedingly great reward.*** (Genesis 15:1) We find no greater reward in prayer, devotion and worship than in encountering the God of Psalm 132, Who loves to dwell with His people. We were specifically designed to be entirely fulfilled by His presence. ***"The goal of prayer is God!"*** Corey Russell

O. As we behold God and engage in the ONE THING, WE ARE FILLED WITH SUPERNATURAL JOY and exhilaration. ***Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and I will make them joyful in My House of Prayer... for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.*** (Isaiah 56:7) One Thing fulfills the innate, human desire for the joy that the Father hard-wired us for.

P. When we sit at His feet WE RECEIVE AN EXHILARATION THAT IS UNLIKE ANY OTHER joy that we can experience. ***Though you have not seen Him (with the naked eye) you love Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.*** (1 Peter 1:8) The truth of the matter is there is more to exhilarate the human heart in righteousness, than the world will ever be able to offer us. The lie that our world tells us is that there is no deep joy in knowing God and living in righteousness. If we don't tap into the exhilaration that's to be found in Him, we will go searching for it somewhere else.

Q. Jesus' exhortation to the Church is not, ***"Sit at My feet and be joyful"***. His extraordinary exhortation is this, ***"Let Me be your joy! Find joy in Who I Am!"*** In His presence WE DISCOVER THAT HE HIMSELF IS OUR JOY! ***The JOY of the LORD is our strength.*** (Nehemiah 8:10) Jesus Himself is our exhilaration. He gives us eternal, inexhaustible, prevailing and superior source of joy and strength.

R. When we cultivate a life of doing this ONE THING we are engaging the joy and exhilaration that is to be the church's natural - status quo atmosphere. We were created to be daily nourished by His presence. HIS PRESENCE IS OUR JOYFUL NOURISHMENT. This is what was happening in (Acts 2:46-47), where Luke records the followers of Jesus Christ were ***continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with joy and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.***

S. Doing ONE THING is not an invitation to *escapism* that causes us to avoid or detour around trials, temptations, death, sorrow and persecution. As we sit at His feet and take in His words, WE ARE ACCUMULATING STRENGTH WITHIN US that will allow our soul to prevail (though we may not feel it in the moment) through the very center of our darkest hours. ***My brethren, count it all joy, when you fall into various trials.*** (James 1:2) The joy that James exhorts us to can only come from One Who has already passed through tears, sorrow, grief and death, and destroyed (Hebrews 2:14 & 1 John 3:8) the worst of what a hostile world could do to us.

T. In doing the ONE THING, WE SURRENDER our own ability to accomplish tasks, resolve ***distractions***, and solve ***troubles*** to the superior leadership of Jesus. As we engage Him and see Him for Who He really is, the Holy Spirit cultivates humility, weakness, meekness and trust in our lives. Prayer then becomes what weak and needy people engage in before a perfectly powerful, gracious, loving and willing Lord. Praying, worshipping and beholding Jesus actually *constrains* self-reliant men and women to interact with God, until we joyfully yield our anxious hearts to His omnipotent reign. ***My strength is made perfect in weakness.*** (2 Corinthians 12:9)

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