

## The One Thing

### Challenges We Face Today

As disciples of Jesus, we must continue to narrow the focus of our lives down to one thing and one thing only – Jesus. The challenge that many followers of Jesus face is the overwhelming influence of the things of this world and the cares, demands, and responsibilities of life.

- We have so many responsibilities and demands placed on us throughout our day that we often lose sight of Him in our day-to-day dealings with life.
- We may have spiritual knowledge of the many aspects of the Christian life, but we still find it difficult to consistently live what we say we believe.
- We are often unsure of God’s will for our lives and find it difficult to discern His will day-to-day.
- Our prayer time and reading of the Word is not consistent because we do not take time to spend with Him and His Word.

These spiritual challenges must be faced head on and dealt with by keeping our focus on the one most important thing to God – our relationship with His Son.

### Lesson Truth

Unless we keep our relationship with Jesus as the one most important thing throughout our day we will have difficulty living the way, the truth and the life that Jesus has provided for us.

### Lesson Goal

The goal of this lesson is to understand that we must let His life in us overcome our life in the world and to begin making the one thing the most important thing in our own lives.

## Lesson Discussion

As a disciple of Jesus you must commit to giving up the right to yourself to Him and to follow Him only. As a follower of Jesus you must make the “one thing” the highest priority in your life from now on and forever. It does take time, but it is critical that it become the primary focus of your life more and more each day.

Once you understand and make the one thing the most important priority in your life, every other area of your life will fall into place. If you were to do nothing else for the next year except to focus on and get a grip on this one thing, the spiritual transformation in your life would be dramatic.

Just about every problem in the life of a disciple of Jesus can be traced back to a lack of focus on the one thing. Even though it takes time and effort to make the one thing a priority in your life, once you do, a new level of peace, contentment and joy will be yours. You will discover the life that is truly life.

## Story of Two Women

The Scripture for this discussion is found in the Gospel of Luke. It tells the story of two women and their interaction with Jesus.



Luke 10:38-42 ESV “Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to his teaching. 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. But the Lord answered her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are anxious about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.’”

The setting of this passage is in Martha's and Mary's home. Martha opened her home to Jesus and His disciples and she began to make preparations for them.

Martha was a very religious woman who believed in God and lived by His law. She had a good heart and was faithful and diligent in serving others by being a good host.

Martha was busy getting everything ready for the meal when she noticed that Mary was not helping, but was with Jesus and the disciples. Martha came to Jesus and told Him that she was not getting any help from Mary.

Jesus' response to Martha was not what Martha was expecting and I am sure His words did not sit well with her. She was not expecting a lecture about her life and her priorities.

Jesus told Martha that she was worried and upset about many things. He told her in a very direct manner that her life was off track and her priorities, although noble, were out of order.

Jesus pointed out to Martha that her frustration was rooted in something deeper than the fact that Mary was not helping. We see some characteristics of Martha illustrated in this story that are common in most Christians today.

## Getting Distracted



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Luke 10:40 ESV "But Martha was distracted with much serving."

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The first characteristic of Martha we see is that she was distracted. What was Martha distracted from? She was distracted away from Jesus.

The most famous man of all time was in her house and instead of choosing to be with Him, she was distracted by her perceived duties and responsibilities. "I must do this" and "I must do that".

Here was the Son of God in her very presence and she was off doing other things because that was her habit. We humans have a tendency to be programmed by our habits and often we miss out on what God had planned for us.

When I become programmed by habits, I am no longer free to be spontaneous. If I cannot be spontaneous because I am locked into my own little programs and habits, I can miss God's will for my life.

We are often distracted away from Jesus by our own and other's expectations. I must meet this need and that need. Jesus wants us to put aside our own and other's expectations so we are not distracted away from Him.

This does not mean that we ignore important responsibilities, but not everything we think is important is really important. Getting distracted away from Jesus and focusing solely on your own and other's needs or expectations is one of the biggest problems facing the follower of Jesus.

I may think I am serving Jesus by serving the needs of others, but often I am not. Just because I see a need does not necessarily mean I should jump in and take care of it.

Jesus calls us to serve and minister to Him first and then we will know God's will in relation to the needs of others. It is only then that we can truly understand and meet the needs of others according to what God wants to do in their life.

Jesus is suggesting to Martha that she let go of the hustle and bustle of everyday life and take a moment to reexamine her priorities. Jesus wants Martha to understand that what is important to man is not necessarily important to God.

## Being Worried and Upset



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Luke 10:41 ESV “But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things”

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The second thing that Jesus confronts Martha on is that she is worried and upset about many things. In our modern high tech, fast-paced world this kind of behavior has become almost epidemic.

Today people get easily worried and upset. It happens in our homes, in our churches, and at our jobs. This is not the life that Jesus wants us to get trapped in.

The reason we get worried or upset is primarily due to the self-life that dominates our lives. Expectations, demands, perceptions, wants, needs, pride, and ego are often behind the behaviors of being worried and upset.

Self wants and expects things and people to be a certain way, and if they are not, behaviors such as worry, fear, doubt, anger, bitterness, and resentment tend to have their way.

When we take self out of the equation and let Jesus have complete ownership of our lives, we have no cause to ever be worried or upset again. When we give up the right to ourselves to Him, He takes complete responsibility for everything that happens and we are no longer caught in the middle. We are free to experience his peace and joy instead of being worried or upset.



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Matthew 6:25-27 ESV “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than

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they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?”

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When Jesus has the complete right to our lives, He engineers everything in our lives exactly the way He wants.. He is not surprised by anything. How can we be upset or worried in any situation if Jesus is governing everything in our lives?

Is it possible not to be distracted, worried and upset? The answer is a resounding “yes” because this is what Jesus commands. By focusing on the one thing that Jesus says is all we really need, we can overcome these negative behaviors and experience more peace and joy.

Jesus told Martha that only one thing was really needful in her life and that Mary had already recognized that and was embracing it. Jesus never actually says what the one thing is, but it is clearly evident from the context of the passage.

Jesus told Martha that Mary had made the better choice and that it would not be taken from her. There are many good things in life that we can choose to do, but only one of them will be the better or best thing from God’s perspective. Martha’s preparation for the meal was a good thing. But it was not the better or best thing among the choices Martha could have made.

I can sink my heart and life into meeting the needs of people and responding to the cares of this life. The needs of people and the cares of this life are not necessarily bad in themselves, however, they can cause us to miss God’s will for our lives and the resulting blessings that accompany doing His will.

God does require good works, but they must be the works He requires, not what we or other’s think are required. What are the good works God requires? The Jews asked this question and Jesus responded that the works God requires is to believe in His Son.



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John 6:29 ESV “Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

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The work of God is simply this: believe in the one He has sent. That is the one thing that matters most to God: that we believe in and obey His Son. Jesus also taught us about the things that will get in the way of the works God requires.



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Matthew 13:22 ESV “As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.”

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The cares and worries of this life can choke the life of God within us. Two of the fruits of the Spirit are peace and joy. These fruit are absent in our lives when we are choked by worry and cares. We get so wrapped up in all the good things we want to do or are doing that we become easily frustrated, upset or worried when things do not go like we want or expect.



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Matthew 6:33-34 ESV “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

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Of all the good things I can do, I often forget there is something better than all those other things - the “one thing.” Only one thing is really important and needed in our lives, and it is the better choice from God’s perspective than anything else I can do. Of all the good things we can do today, the one thing should always take priority.

As we develop the habit of making the one thing the most important priority in our lives,

we are able to discern God’s viewpoint clearly in each of life’s situations as we learn to see God’s rule in everything.

Jesus says only one thing is needed and that one thing is that I simply allow myself to be completely His. I seek Him and His kingdom first and I begin to produce the works God requires as a result of believing in Jesus..

If I know and believe that Jesus is in complete control of everything in my life, I can have complete confidence that everything is ok all the time. If I know that everything is ok all the time, that things are just as God determines they should be, I have no cause to be worried or upset about anything. All I have to do is the next right thing He shows me to do and leave the outcome to Him.

Keeping my relationship with God through Jesus Christ as the one most important thing in my life above everything and everyone is crucial to living Christian. It means absolute loyalty, devotion and commitment to Jesus above everything else.

Making the one thing the primary focus of my life takes time and commitment. I must continually give up the right to myself to Him and bring every thought, imagination, want, need and desire in line with His will for my life.

I must stop acting like my life is my own to live as I choose. I must realize that I cannot please God by doing more, but by being more His. I do that by allowing the life of Jesus in me to alter and transform my thinking and my behavior.

As He becomes the one important thing over everything else in my life and as I learn to live in Him and allow Him to live in me, my life begins to be transformed and godly character will be the outcome.

Spiritual transformation does not happen through wishful thinking or good intentions, but only by determined, conscious effort to keep Jesus in His rightful place in my life. Pursue the

“one thing” relentlessly until it becomes your very life.



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James 4:8 ESV “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”

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God is not so much interested in what I can do for Him but that I am His. What He truly wants is for my life to be committed and devoted to His Son above all else. The one thing is about being not doing. The right doing will be the outcome of right being.



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John 15:5-8 ESV “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”

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The problem is that even though we may understand and accept this truth about the one thing, we really don’t know how to make it a reality in our daily life.

We know intellectually what our relationship with Jesus should be and how we should be living, but if we are honest and truthful, we will have to admit that we often are not living it.

Often our relationship with Jesus is shallow because we don’t really know Him. We get so busy with life that we cannot and will not take time to really know Him. We substitute the things of this life in place of Him. We want to keep doing and doing but He just wants us to sit quietly before Him, listen to Him, learn from Him, and just be His.

His desire is that we just relax and enjoy Him and let Him be God in our lives. He wants to pour His life out through your life to touch others, but He never gets the chance because we are so busy doing. This can be especially prevalent in church work and religious activities.

Jesus tells Martha that there is a better quality of life for her where there is freedom from worry and stress, freedom from being upset, and freedom from fear and doubt of what others will say and think. That quality of life only comes through the one thing.

As a follower of Jesus, only one thing is really important. That is the better thing, the best thing most needed in your life as His follower. It will be the determining factor of whether or not you will continue to follow Him.



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Matthew 16:24-25 ESV “Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

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### **One Step for Living This Truth**

As we learn what is really important to God, we must shift our focus to those things instead of the things of this world.

Only one thing is really important in our lives from God’s perspective as followers of Jesus. You must believe this and begin to live your life as if the “one thing” is truly the most important thing in your life.

## **ACTION STEP**

**Strengthen your relationship with Jesus each day by spending at least 30 minutes with Him every day. The focus for this time is to think about the “one thing” and how your everyday life is or is not reflecting the “one thing” as your true priority in life.**

**During your devotion time commit you life to Jesus completely and surrender the right to yourself to Him for that day. If you are not doing so already, try to read a chapter a day in the Gospels and the Letters. It is through His word that we are constantly reminded of God’s viewpoint in every area of our life.**

**As you are involved in your daily interests, pursuits and activities, God’s Spirit will convict you of those activities that are hindering your relationship with Him. Those are the things you will need to renounce and put aside in your life.**

**When Jesus confronted Martha, she had a choice to make. Either change or continue to miss out on God’s best. You will have completed the goal of this lesson when you understand clearly the “one thing” and you begin to renounce things that hinder the “one thing” in your life.**

**Stay with it until you know you are beginning to live this truth daily. Review this lesson as often as you need to so you remember to pursue the One Thing above all other things.**

## **Bumper Sticker Summary**

The One Thing is Jesus – the way, the truth and the life. Your priorities will show you what is important to you. If the One Thing is not at the top of your priority list each day you will falter and grow stagnant in your walk. If peace, joy and contentment are absent in your life, most likely you have lost sight of the One Thing.

## **Illustration**

Nathan was overwhelmed by all his responsibilities with family, work, and church activities. He had taken on a lot of duties in the church because he thought the more he did the more his life would be pleasing to God. He was becoming discouraged because he thought that when he became a Christian that there would be peace and contentment and joy in the work he was doing.

His bible study leader noticed that John was struggling and took him aside one day to see if he could help John in his walk. John shared with Nathan how the One Thing had helped him get his life to the place of peace and contentment, even while having a busy life. He shared the story about Mary and Martha and showed Nathan how his life was just like hers.

John explained to Nathan why Mary had chosen the better way and how to bring that attitude into his own life so he could prioritize all his activities toward the One Thing. Nathan realized that he was spending more time doing than being and then began pursuing his relationship with Jesus above all else. John began to meet with Nathan weekly to help him develop a devotional life with prayer and God’s Word. It was not long before Nathan’s attitude had changed as he began to make the One Thing a reality in his life.



**Scripture on the One Thing**

Mark 10:21 ESV “And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”

John 1:25 ESV “He answered, “Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.”

Philippians 3:13 ESV “Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,”

Psalms 27:4 ESV “One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.”

Psalms 27:8 ESV “You have said, ‘Seek my face.’ My heart says to you, ‘Your face, LORD do I seek.’”

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**Notes**