

Jesus, one on one

TOO BUSY TO LISTEN TO JESUS 3/5/2023

LUKE 10:38-42

MAIN POINT

NOTE, this may be out of order! Please also see Luke 12:13-21 (next week). At the time of publish, we had not determined the order. Today's message will be on Jesus' personal interaction with people (From the gospel of Luke).

One person at a time, One conversation at a time, One act of kindness at a time. Jesus taught us the importance of focusing on the person in front of us. Throughout the gospel of Luke, we see a record of Jesus personal interactions with a variety of people. He demonstrated that impacting others begins by focusing on the person in front of you. Following His example, we learn to focus on one person at a time, engaging in one conversation at a time, demonstrating one act of kindness at a time.

The lesson will focus on:

Sometimes our attention to our many tasks can distract us from listening to the teaching of Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

How many hours a week do you spend working? How often are you distracted by work when you really should be spending time with family or friends? What are some of the major distractions of our culture?

What role does electronic communication (phone, computer, watches) keep people too distracted to listen and or worship?

How can you minimize their impact during times of focus?

We live in an incredibly busy world it seems like there are countless events, people, and pressures competing for our attention and time. By looking at the example of Mary and Martha, we will see that sometimes our attention to our many tasks, including ways we serve the body of Christ, can distract us from listening to the teaching of Jesus.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 10:38-39.

What are some positive things we can glean about Martha from these two verses? Why do you think she welcomed Jesus into her home?

Do you think the “also” in verse 39 implies that Martha also sat at Jesus feet? Do you think she was trying to listen but couldn’t because of her many tasks?

Martha had good intentions. Jesus once told His followers, foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head (Luke 9:58). If Martha had not been kind enough to open her home to Jesus, He would have had to sleep outside. Jesus counted on the kindness of people like Martha in order to have a place to rest.

Can you name a time in your life when you began to do something for the right reasons, but soon got overwhelmed? How quickly did you lose your joy? How often do we grow to dislike a good thing because of the work it takes to do it?

If you set a new year’s resolution, how are they going? What has helped or hindered?

We often begin this way with church tasks. We know the nursery needs help, so we volunteer. We know they need a teacher in the children’s department, or the church needs a volunteer for a hospitality ministry. We volunteer because we see a good work that needs doing, but sometimes we find ourselves overwhelmed with the work. If we aren’t careful, this can lead us to have a bitter attitude.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 10:40.

What sort of attitude do you have when you are too busy? Is it possible to be so involved in the service of the church and the service of others that you cease to be helpful? Can we serve to our own detriment?

Why do you think Martha asked Jesus if He cared? Who is Martha upset with, Jesus or Mary? Why didn’t Martha ask Mary to help directly?

How can volunteering to do a good thing, like being hospitable to Jesus, cause us to sin? How hard is it to tell when we are over-worked or just over-worried?

Martha’s busyness led her to aggravation. First, she spoke harshly to her own guest. A guest she invited herself: Lord, don’t You care? Second, she became angry with her sister, even referring to Mary as if she wasn’t in the room. Resentment can easily cause us to ruin our relationships with others.

For example, let’s imagine that someone volunteers for the nursery because he/she wants to help and loves children. But he/she winds

up on the schedule a lot because volunteers are short. This volunteer notices that certain church members never volunteer for the nursery. Have you ever experienced something like that developing into a grudge? Describe what happened and how you handled your feelings (for good or for bad).

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 10:41-42.

What was the right choice that Mary made? Why did Jesus defend Mary?

What were the many things Martha might have been worried and upset about? How could she have handled the situation better? What was Martha's error?

Martha was probably distracted by several important things. She probably worried about Jesus and the disciples receiving a warm welcome with good food and something to drink. She might have been worried about everyone having a clean place to sit. She could have been distracted by so many people being in her house. Whatever the case, Martha's worries distracted her from listening to Jesus.

There are times when we have to leave service and simply listen to the teaching of Jesus. We will not be fit to serve in any ministry if that ministry takes us away from the Word of God consistently. Like Martha, we will begin to resent that others aren't working as hard as we are. We might even think that we can get Jesus to rebuke others for not being as good at volunteering as we are. It is a terrible thing to host a party but miss out on the happiness of your own guests. Sometimes, the food can wait. Sometimes, people may have to simply take care of themselves. Sometimes, we need to just sit and listen to the teachings of God's Word.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How can we be careful not to over-work or over-worry ourselves in the service of the church?

How can we guard ourselves against judging how much work others are doing? How can we keep volunteering from feeling like unavoidable obligations?

Have you been sitting and listening to Jesus by the preaching of God's Word? Is it time for you to make Mary's choice, and sit and listen?

PRAYER

Offer a time for group members to pray aloud, thanking God for salvation through Jesus Christ. Ask the Lord to keep us from becoming so busy that we forget to listen. Pray that

the Lord will show us if we have become embittered through service and to help us repent if we have. Ask that the Lord will help us find joy in our work instead of it becoming a distraction.

COMMENTARY

LUKE 10:38-42

10:38. The long journey to Jerusalem continues. John 11:1 and 12:1-3 locate Mary and Martha in Bethany. Luke simply placed them in a village. Location was not important for him. Response to Jesus is. Martha responded in the typical homeowner's way: fulfilling the social obligations.

10:39. Sister Mary responded in a different way. The rabbis had taught people to listen to wise men or teachers but not to talk much with women. Jesus, the wisest of men, welcomed Mary to his audience of learners.

10:40. Social obligations finally got the best of Martha, especially when her sister proved to be of no help. Rather than inviting her sister to help, Martha went straight to Jesus for authority to force her sister to work.

10:41-42. For once a person in need did not receive Christ's blessing. The need was out of focus and misplaced. Martha was too stressed out about earthly things. Her life was out of focus, dedicated to fulfilling the world's expectations rather than Jesus'. Life has one essential need: to hear and obey the Word of God (see 8:18-20). Mary made the right choice. Jesus would not take away from her the blessing and opportunity. At the crossroads of decision making, Martha had opted for worldly expectation and social obligation, Mary, for hearing Christ's Word. Martha needed to change her priorities. When the Word is taught, listen. All else is secondary.