



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V27 N42 October 19, 2025

CROSSWALK

"Heart Before Hustle"

Luke 10:38-42

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Single-Mindedness

I focus on God and his priorities for my life.

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Matthew 6:33



Q?

What is the main thing?



Single-mindedness is not a matter of doing one thing to the exclusion of all other things. It's a matter of priorities and proper balance. It's not a matter of choosing to either work like Martha or worship like Mary. It's a matter of choosing to put both work and worship in their proper place. Someone has said that the problem with contemporary Christianity is this: Christians *worship* their *work*, *work* at their *play*, and *play* at their *worship*. Warren Wiersbe's comments on Luke 10:38-42 are too good to not share. He writes:

"It seems evident that the Lord wants each of us to imitate Mary in our worship and Martha in our work. Blessed are the balanced!"

"Consider Martha's situation. She received Jesus into her home and then neglected Him as she prepared an elaborate meal that He did not need! Certainly a meal was in order, but what we do with Christ is far more important than what we do for Christ. Again, it is not an either/or situation; it is a matter of balance. Mary had done her share of the work in the kitchen and then had gone to 'feed' on the Lord's teachings. Martha felt neglected after Mary left the kitchen, and she began to complain and to suggest that neither the Lord nor Mary really cared!"

"Few things are as damaging to the Christian life as trying to work for Christ without taking time to commune with Christ. 'For without Me ye can do nothing' (John 15:5). Mary chose the better part, the part that could not be taken from her. She knew that she could not live 'by bread alone' (Matt. 4:14).

"Whenever we criticize others and pity ourselves because we feel overworked, we had better take time to examine our lives. Perhaps in all of our busyness, we have been ignoring the Lord. Martha's problem was not that she had too much work to do, but that she allowed her work to distract her and pull her apart. She was trying to serve two mas-

ters! If serving Christ makes us difficult to live with, then something is terribly wrong with our service!"

"The key is to have the right priorities: Jesus Christ first, then others, then ourselves. It is vitally important that we spend time 'at the feet of Jesus' every single day, letting Him share His Word with us. The most important part of the Christian life is the part that only God sees. Unless we meet Christ personally and privately each day, we will soon end up like Martha: busy but not blessed."

"Often in my pastoral ministry, I have asked people with serious problems, 'Tell me about your devotional life.' The usual response has been an embarrassed look, a bowed head, and the quiet confession, 'I stopped reading my Bible and praying a long time ago.' And they wondered why they had problems!" (*The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 1:213).

Steven Covey was neither *all wrong* nor *all right* when he advised readers of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*: "the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." The phrase emphasizes the importance of focusing on one's highest priorities and core goals, and avoiding distractions that can pull a person away from achieving them. To effectively 'keep the main thing the main thing,' one must first identify what truly matters, then prioritize their efforts on those key goals, and finally, be willing to eliminate distractions and other less important tasks. But can believers have more than one *main thing*? On the one hand, the Core Practice *Single-Mindedness* perhaps suggests, no, but on the other its creed reads, "I focus on God and his priorities for my life," perhaps suggesting, yes—like the story of Martha and Mary suggests, yes. Balance seems to be the key to resolving the ambiguity. Covey's advice might be better worded, "the main thing is to keep the main *things* the main thing."

Read Luke 10:38-42

38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. 40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but few things are needed – or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Read another translation

38 As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. 39 Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught. 40 But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me."

41 But the Lord said to her, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! 42 There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her." (NLT)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Bracket "on their way" in v. 38.
- Bracket "opened her home" in v. 38.
- Circle "sat" in v. 39.
- Circle "listening" in v. 39.
- Box "But" indicating contrast in v. 40.
- Circle "distracted" in v. 40.
- Circle "preparations" in v. 40.
- Bracket "don't you care" in v. 40.
- Circle "Martha, Martha" in v. 41.
- Underline "worried and upset" in v. 41.
- Circle "only one" in v. 42.
- Circle "better" in v. 42.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Jesus and his disciples are on their way where? (See 9:51.)
 2. To whom *exactly* did Martha open her home?
 3. How do you picture the setting?
 4. Describe the relationship of Martha and Mary.
 5. What does Mary's body language tell you?
 6. Explain the *contrast* in verse 40.
 7. Was Martha annoyed with Mary or annoyed with Jesus? Explain.
 8. How did Jesus want Martha to change? Explain.
 9. Describe the "one thing" that is "better."
 10. **Discussion:** Talk about why you think you are more like Martha or more like Mary.
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Commentary On The Text

Luke gives us a glimpse into Jesus' personal relationship to Martha and Mary in his elegant account of the Savior's visit in their home. Jesus and his disciples come to the village outside of Jerusalem where the women live, presumably with their brother, Lazarus (see Jn 11). Once there, we hear nothing more about the disciples. Perhaps they are present, although according to Luke, "Martha opened her home to *him*," i.e., Jesus. Lazarus isn't mentioned either. Perhaps he is present also. On the one hand, a house full of people would explain why "Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made" (v. 40). On the other, Martha may have been overdoing it in an effort to honor the Lord by preparing him a meal he would never forget. Regardless, "Martha certainly meant well, but alas, her too great zeal to entertain the Saviour [*sic*] well, caused her to become sulky towards her sister who sat and listened, and also towards the Lord Himself because He did not tell Mary to go and help with the serving" (Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, NICNT, 315-16). Whatever the case, the story is only about Martha, Mary, and Jesus.

Events unfold rapidly once the characters are introduced. Mary sits down at the feet of Jesus, like any good disciple would, to hear every word he had to say, leaving "all the preparations" for the meal to her sister. On the significance of what Mary did, one commentator writes: "The significance of this scene is enhanced when we recognize that it fits into a repeated discipleship theme of hearing and doing the word, relating that theme *to women*. Both the indication that Mary had 'seated herself beside the Lord's feet' and the statement that she 'was hearing his word' (10:39) show her beginning to assume the role of a disciple. She is beginning to respond to Jesus' call to hear his words and do them (6:47). This challenge and invitation is reemphasized in 11:27-28, following the story of Mary and Martha, and there is a special concern to indicate that this challenge to discipleship applies to women as well as men . . . A woman's happiness and fulfillment are not simply by-products of her role as wife and mother. Therefore, Jesus protects the right of Martha's sister Mary to be free from domestic duties in order to begin the path of discipleship" (Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 1:137).

Martha also wants to hear what Jesus is saying, but she has more urgent things tugging at her. The story reaches its climax when Martha can put up

with Mary no longer and asks the Lord to intervene. "'Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!'" She is obviously annoyed with Mary, who left all the serving to her, but she may be annoyed, as well, with Jesus, who welcomed her sister's undivided attention. Martha expects Jesus to respond to her rhetorical question by correcting Mary. Instead, he responds by correcting her. She is "worried and upset" over many evanescent things, he says, when "one thing" matters more than them all.

The story concludes with the Lord's somewhat surprising response. Instead of telling Mary, "Go help your sister; we can talk more later" or words to that effect, he tells Martha, "'Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.'" One commentator summarizes the point of the passage this way: "This story should not be taken to mean that the Saviour [*sic*] taught that a life of quiet worship and contemplation is the right form of religion and that an active Christian life is to be disapproved of. There is here no question of such a contrast. What we do learn here is that in our life's active service we must not be anxious and agitated, sulky and dissatisfied with our fellow-Christians or with our Master, and that we should not busy ourselves to such an extent with outward things that we neglect the quiet worship of the Lord. The most important part of our religion is the spiritual exercise of communion with our Redeemer" (Geldenhuys, 316).

Another writes: "The passage is a key discipleship text—not in the comparison between Martha and Mary's tasks, but in how Martha has wrongly judged Mary's inaction and worries too much about what others are doing. The text has two distinct emphases: Martha's consumption with assessing others as she performs what she is called to do, and Mary's wisdom in seeking some time at the feet of Jesus. Both qualities, one negative and the other positive, are at the heart of discipleship" (Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke*, 305).

The *upper* story of this narrative is about Jesus, who as Peter says, has "the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68). The *lower* story is about our need to recognize that we do "not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD" (Dt 8:3). Mary is an example of one who knows this while Martha is an example of one who busies herself with the food that perishes.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 38 **on their way** Cf., 9:51. "At 9:51 Jesus 'resolutely set out for Jerusalem.' As noted earlier, what follows is called the travel narrative, or the journey to Jerusalem, since for the next ten chapters Jesus is heading for Jerusalem to accomplish his messianic role. What is unusual about this 'journey' is that Jesus does not head straight for Jerusalem but wanders from place to place. Though notices in the text occasionally remind the reader that Jesus is traveling (9:57; 10:1, 38; 18:35; 19:1), or that he is heading for Jerusalem (9:51-56; 13:22, 33; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11, 28, 41; cf. 19:45), the bulk of the material is not a travel itinerary at all but the teaching of Jesus together with a few miracle stories. In short, the journey is not a straight-line trip to Jerusalem but a period of Jesus' heightened resolve to reach his Jerusalem goal. It expresses a changed emphasis in his ministry as he 'resolves' to go to Jerusalem to fulfill the role of the suffering Messiah. Here we see the key symbolic and theological role of Jerusalem in Luke's work. It is in Jerusalem the prophets were killed, and there God will accomplish his salvation (13:32-35)" (Mark L. Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus*, 273).

v. 38 **opened her home** Cf., "welcomed him into her house" (ESV). The verb means "to receive or welcome as a guest" (Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, 172).

v. 39 **sat** Lit., "seated herself" (Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 1:137); cf., "who sat down at the feet of the Lord" (GNT); "who was seated" (NASB). "This reflexive makes it clear that Mary took the initiative in sitting by Jesus" (the NET Bible, 131^{tn} on Luke 10:39). "'Mary' (or Miriam, cf. 1:27; et al.) took the traditional place of a disciple, seating herself at Jesus' 'feet' to listen and learn (cf. Acts 22:3). Normally rabbis did not permit women to do this in Jesus' day" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Luke," 2013 ed., 152 italics added, www.soniclight.com).

v. 39 **listening** "'Listening' is a durative imperfect and emphasizes a continual listening. She was listening to 'what he said' (literally his word)" (Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC, 321).

v. 40 **distracted** "The verb [*perispaomai*] means in the passive 'to be pulled, dragged away', hence 'to become distracted, busy, overburdened', and is often constructed with [*peri*], as here (AG s.v.). The implication is and is often constructed with [*peri*], as here (AG s.v.). The implication is that Martha wished to hear Jesus but was prevented from doing so by the pressure of providing hospitality (Luce, 208)" (Marshall, 452). "Martha also wanted to hear Jesus, but

the tyranny of the urgent prevented her from doing this" (Stein, 321).

v. 40 **preparations** Lit., "with much serving;" cf., "to serve alone" (ESV). "The story of Mary and Martha (10:38-42) contrasts Martha, who represents the expected role of a woman in serving a dinner, with Mary, who neglects this responsibility in order to listen to Jesus' word. Martha's complaint raises the issue of whether Mary is right in neglecting her woman's duty and leaving her sister to work alone" (Tannehill, 136). "In a Jewish context . . . women were not allowed to serve at meals if men were in attendance, unless there were no servants to perform the task." See Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, 101. Evidently there were no servants in this household, for Martha complains of being left 'alone' to serve. On the same page Witherington comments, "Though . . . women could attend synagogue, learn, and even be learned if their husbands or masters were rabbis, for a rabbi to come into a woman's house and teach her specifically is unheard of. Further, being alone with two women who were not one's relatives was considered questionable behaviour [*sic*] by the rabbis. Thus, not only the role Mary assumes, but also the task Jesus performs in this story is in contrast to what was expected of a Jewish man and woman'" (Tannehill, 136-37 footnote).

v. 40 **don't you care** "The way the question is asked in Greek makes it clear that Martha anticipates a positive answer to her question. She expects Jesus to come to her aid" (Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke*, 304).

v. 41 **Martha, Martha** "Jesus' emotion-filled reply to Martha, speaking her name twice, indicates just how appropriate it is for this sister to sit before him" (Bock, 304).

v. 42 **one thing** The verse contains a difficult textual problem (see Walter L. Liefeld, "Luke," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 8:945; Marshall, 452-53); most English versions reflect the reading followed by the NIV (e.g., ESV, NET, NRSV, GNT, NLT, HCSB, NKJV; cf., NJB).

v. 42 **better** Lit., "good portion" (ESV); cf., "better part" (NRSV, NJB), "right thing" (GNT), "right choice" (HCSB). "'Better' is literally good, but in koine Greek the positive adjective (good) could be used for the comparative (better) or even the superlative (best; cf. Matt. 5:19; 22:36). Although there is a comparison between two things here, the superlative is to be preferred, for nothing is better than what Mary chose" (Stein, 321); cf., "best part" (NET).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE

Hearing and learning from Jesus is the *main* thing, even more important than doing other commendable things that matter.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. What does this passage lead me to do?



PARENT CONNECTION

Answer this honestly – can you relate more to Mary or Martha? We often think this is a lesson for women, but men, this is for you too! Whom do you relate to most? I want to be more like Mary, but there are things to do! If Jesus were my house guest, I want to say I would leave the house dirty and the food uncooked and the sheets unwashed. I'd forget that deadline and the voicemail that needs to be returned and the meeting (yes, the meeting would go!) and spend my time sitting at His feet. But I honestly think I would do the exact opposite and put it into turbo drive. I can see myself striving to give an appearance of clean while internally seething. And I would miss the moment. I'd miss the opportunity to lead my children directly to the feet of Jesus. I'd miss the opportunity to revel in the fellowship of biblical community. I'd miss the opportunity to absorb the personal teaching of my Savior. I'd miss what matters most. Take a moment right now to think about how you've ordered your day. What's at the top of your list? Is it a meeting a work deadline or getting all the kids out of the house on time for your toddler's soccer game? Take a deep breath and ask, "What matters most right now?" Do you need to move Jesus up on your list or put it all aside for a moment in prayer and thanksgiving? You a model for your child to follow? Where are you leading—fellowship with Jesus or what's next on your list?

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Luke 10:38-42.

1. What was Mary doing while Jesus was at their home?
2. What was Martha doing while Jesus was at their home?
3. What was Jesus' response to Martha's question?

What Do You Think?

Why was Mary's choice better?

What Do You Do?

Make a log of all the things you do each day (school, sleep, Minecraft, prayer, etc.). At the end of the week, decide what gets in the way of your relationship with Jesus. What can you remove and what will you put in its place?

CORE COMPETENCY: Personal God

I believe God cares about everything in my life.

MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 46:1

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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**CENTRAL
BIBLE CHURCH**

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OUR MISSION
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.