

*Question: I really want to be a good Christian, so I'm involved in everything at church I am asked to do— children's ministry, food for the poor, worship committee— as well as working forty hours a week.*

*Why do I feel burnt out instead of fulfilled?*

I am reminded of the time Jesus visited the home of two sisters named Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42). Martha got busy with the preparations for the meal while Mary sat at the feet of Jesus listening to what he said. Martha complained and asked Jesus to tell Mary to help her. But Jesus responded, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:42 NIV).

It was not that Martha's work was wrong. The task-oriented Martha is always needed, but we must also reserve a place for the meditative Mary. Without time for quiet communion with Jesus, we cannot sustain a life of activity, even Christian activity. Although Jesus often spoke of the importance of serving and helping others (John 13:2-15; Mark 10:45; Matthew 25:31-46), he also taught that we need to balance service activity with times for quiet and spiritual nourishment. The busyness of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century can often mislead us into feeling guilty of some sin if we are not constantly on the move doing something.

The ultimate purpose of the Christian life is our relationship with God. But the marketplace of life has led us to believe that time is money and that the more activities we can cram into our lives the happier we will be. However, this constant push to busyness does not bring fulfillment. Instead, it often brings frustration, exhaustion and even breakdowns in mental and physical health. One may spend so much time working to provide for the family that he has little time to spend with that family. In the same way, we can become so distracted by church activity that we neglect time for a relationship with our creator and savior. Enthusiastic activity divorced from communion with God in quiet times of prayer, meditation, reading and listening for his will for our lives, leads to spiritual emptiness and burnout. We desperately need some sense of balance in our lives.

One should not stop serving completely, but neither should she try to do everything herself. We must learn to trust our Lord to take care of some things. He is capable and willing. We must trust Jesus to be the Savior of the world. That is not our job. One should not feel guilty about slowing down to get rest and spiritual nourishment like Mary did. That's what Jesus would do. In fact, that's what he often did while on earth (Mark 14:23; John 6:15).

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