

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?

Although Jesus taught the importance of serving and helping others, he also taught that we need restful times of quiet for spiritual nourishment. The marketplace of life has led us to believe that work is money and that the more activities we can cram into our lives the better. This idea has led many Christians to believe that their relationship with God is also enhanced by more activity as part of the church. A person can become so busy working to provide for the family that there is no longer the time or energy to enjoy his family. In the same way, one can become so distracted by church activity that the relationship with the creator is neglected. The ultimate purpose of the Christian life is our relationship with God. Enthusiastic activity apart from communion with God in quiet times of prayer, meditation, reading and listening for God's will for your life, often leads to spiritual emptiness and burnout.

Jesus once visited the home of the sisters, Martha and Mary, in Bethany just outside of Jerusalem. Martha got busy with all of 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).

Martha's work as a host of the Lord was not wrong. A task-oriented Martha is always needed, but we must also reserve a place for a meditative Mary. Without time for quiet and restful communion with God, we cannot sustain a life of activity, even Christian activity. We must learn to trust Jesus and not ourselves to be the Savior of the world. This does not mean we should stop serving completely. But neither should we feel a need to do everything. We must allow God to take care of some things, and we should not feel guilty about slowing down to get rest and spiritual nourishment. That's what Jesus would do. In fact, that's what he often did while on earth.

[Send questions or comments to University Church of Christ, 801 N. 12th, Murray, KY 42071 or phone 270-753-1881. This article is reproduced on the web: www.nchrist.org] 2012/08/24