

Upright Woman



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Lessons from Martha

by Lisa Puckett



Lisa Puckett is a member of the Colleyville church of Christ where her husband Grant serves as one of the elders. Grant and Lisa have three children, two currently attending Texas A&M and one who is a senior in high school.

The song "Come and See" by Andy Baker includes the line: "Teacher, I want to know you as you truly are." The chorus answers: "Child, you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. If you follow my commandments then you'll truly follow Me!" As Christians, we must examine our lives often to see if we are truly following Jesus. Do we spend too much time being busybodies (2 Thess. 3:11)? Are we self-centered and not focused on the needs of others (James 2:14-17)? Or conversely, do we serve and help others to exhaustion, forgetting the most important thing?

Martha falls into this trap in Luke 10:38-42. This is our first record of Mary and Martha together with Jesus. Martha becomes "distracted with much serving" and grumbles to Jesus. She calls Him Lord, yet doubts whether He cares for her. She asks, "Do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?" She does not understand the necessity of taking time to listen to Jesus. Knowing Jesus begins with seeing and hearing Him. While we cannot see and hear Jesus today, we have the word of God to make Him manifest to us.

The next recorded meeting of Mary and Martha and Jesus is four days after Lazarus' death (John 11). When Martha hears that Jesus is coming, she runs to meet Him. She is beginning to have a better understanding of who Jesus is. She listens to Jesus, though she remains confused about His word. She confesses, "...even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." Yet, faith can be challenging. When Jesus later says, "Take away the stone," Martha responds that there would be a stench. She is listening, but does not fully understand.

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Our final record of Martha is in John 12 (also Matthew 26). A supper is made for Jesus at Simon the leper's house. It is at this supper that Mary anoints Jesus' feet and wipes His feet with her hair. John 12:2 includes the very simple phrase "and Martha served." Now there is understanding. Martha no longer complains about the tasks at hand. She does not complain that Mary wastes expensive oil. When we serve one another, we must do so with the knowledge of who Jesus is so that we might have the right attitude in our service.

Galatians 5:13 says, "through love serve one another." The remaining verses in Galatians explain how to do this. Galatians 5:16-26 paints the attitude we should have as we live in the Spirit. We walk in the Spirit, producing the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 6:1-6 tells us to "Bear one another's burdens." This refers to spiritual burdens—our first responsibility—which relates to the "one thing...that good part" that will "so fulfill the law of Christ" (Luke 10:42, Gal. 6:2). However, physical needs should not be ignored. Galatians 6:7-10 tells us to "not grow weary while doing good" and "as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." When we study and understand the words of Jesus, we can truly follow Jesus as we serve one another through love.

Am I Just Busy?

by Karen Speir

Busy. It's a word many of us use quite frequently—we're crazy busy, very busy, or just plain busy. We've got work to do, houses to clean, children to raise, meals to prepare, classes to teach, ladies' days to plan, friends to connect with, spouses to love. We are busy!

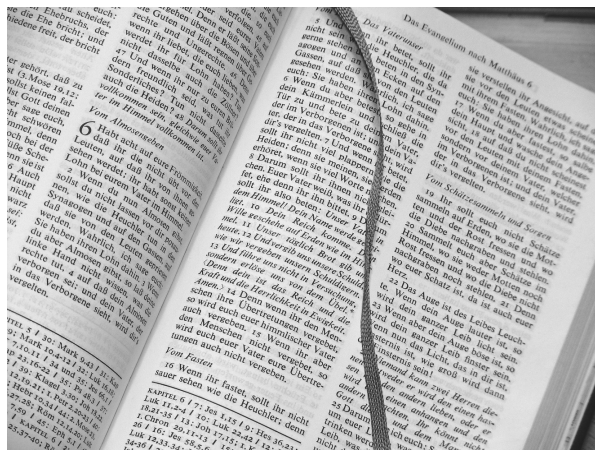
The Oxford Journal of Consumer Research, found that "busyness and overwork, rather than a leisurely life, have become a status symbol in contemporary American culture." Unfortunately, this phenomena isn't limited to those in the world, it's also pervasive in the Lord's church. We Martha's have a tendency to wear our busyness as badge of honor and are embarrassed if not ridiculously busy at all times, fearing being considered lazy or not spiritual enough.

Although we read in Psalm 11:7 of the Lord's "love for righteous deeds," we also read in Matthew 7:21-23 the possibility of His professing to have never known us regardless of how many deeds we've done. "Busyness is not a spiritual gift"; busyness isn't necessarily a virtue and can actually be a vice, depending on our motivation. (Ps. 127:2)

In a survey of over 20,000 professed Christians across 139 countries, six in ten said that it's "often" or "always" true that "the busyness of life gets in the way of developing a personal relationship with God." So while we might be busy, even busy serving the Lord, we have to ask, "Is our busyness giving us a false sense of security?" Are we equating being involved in every congregational, workplace, and school activity with being spiritual? Are we guilty of thinking our lives cannot possibly be trivial or meaningless if we are so busy and in demand every hour of the day?

Are we so busy engaging in activities (which in and of themselves are not wrong) while neglecting our personal relationship with God? Maybe it's an issue of not using my time wisely, trying to do too much, or simply wasting time. We need to ask ourselves: "How much time and energy am I investing in personal Bible study? How much of my day is devoted to communing with my heavenly Father in prayer?" Maybe we just need better time management. Perhaps the problem is with the heart and we need to ask ourselves, "Why am I doing any of the things I'm doing and who is being glorified in the doing—God or me?" (Matt. 7:21-23)

Inc.Online contributor Damon Brown makes a couple of observations about why many of us keep ourselves excessively busy. While this is aimed at those in the business world, I believe it's applicable to the church as well. Brown states that:



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1. Busyness fulfills the ego: In business, busyness has become an acute measurement of entrepreneurial worth. Have we made busyness in the church the barometer by which we measure spiritual worth?
 2. Busyness fulfills the silence: Being still often scares us, makes us feel anxious, and even gives us time to think about the things we've been avoiding with busyness. There's so much to be discovered when we allow ourselves to stop and quiet down. Are we staying busy to avoid working on the areas of our lives that really need our attention? Are we trying to assuage our guilt by staying too busy to think (Psa. 46:10)?

Whatever the reason for our busyness, be it a time management issue or a heart issue, we need to find a balance and our foremost priority should be our personal relationship with God. If that relationship is what it should be, all else will fall into place.

First, we should start our day with God in prayer. (Jam. 4:8; Ps. 5:3) Praying for wisdom and guidance in choosing what is most needful each day to be a pleasing, faithful servant can truly be a blessing and give us proper perspective. Second, we must honestly examine ourselves in light of scripture and make the necessary changes to live pleasing to our God (2 Cor. 13:5; Eccl. 12:13-14).

Running ragged and trying to do it all - either to boost our ego, soothe our guilt, or avoid our true spiritual condition is not pleasing to God. It is simply the means by which we are deceiving ourselves. (Lk 16:15; II Cor. 10:12; Matt 7:21-23) Starting our day with God will help us to seek to do His will for His glory, not our own, as we go about our day.

Yes we need to be about our Father's business, busily serving in the Kingdom but we must have the proper motives for doing so and never to the neglect of our own personal relationship with the Father.

Priorities in My Home

by Jennifer Webster

In 1 Kings 20, we read about a man who was charged with the safe-keeping of a prisoner. While the prisoner was in this man's care, he escaped. In verse 40, the servant gave

"Be still
and know
that I am
God"

the king his excuse for how this happened: "And as your servant was busy here and there, he was gone." Like the popular saying goes, this man had "one job." However, because he got distracted and lost his focus, he lost his charge.

When it comes to parenting, we have one job, and that's to get our children to heaven. Just like the servant in 1 Kings 20:40, parents can get "busy here and there" and lose those who are committed to our care. It's amazing how simple it is to lose our spiritual focus! There are many good things calling for our attention: jobs, household duties, school, friendships, hobbies. It takes intention and purpose to be spiritually focused. We have to remember what the apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:13, "This one thing I do...."

It can be helpful to discern whether or not our homes are spiritually focused by asking ourselves these questions: Do I spend more time watching television or studying my Bible? Do I text friends more often than I talk to God? Are my closest friends those of the household of God or are they worldly friends from work or school? Is it my goal for my child to excel in sports or to be mighty in the scriptures? Are my entertainment choices holy and becoming of a Christian?

Our greatest danger in parenting is allowing earthly things to distract us from eternal things. In order to maintain our spiritual focus, we must make every decision for our families in light of eternity (Matt. 6:33).

Upcoming Events

April 13
Ladies Day
Colleyville church of Christ

April 15-17
Evangelism Workshop
Rob Whitacre

May 18
Ladies Day
South Oak COC (Dime Box, TX)

Christ is My Center

by Olivia Akin

What blessings do we have if Christ is our priority? In looking at the life of Paul through the letters he wrote, we see that he had a life of encouragement, peace, joy, and contentment—all because of the one person at the center of his life.

Having Christ as priority brought Paul a greater relationship with the brethren. They all had the same goal (working for the glory of God), and it gave them a purpose more meaningful than themselves and/or any petty things they may have seen as important at some point in their lives (Phil. 3:3-8). Their purpose was one full of encouragement and prayers for each other. They were always building one another up (Eph. 1:15-23, 3:14-21). Having Christ as priority also brought Paul peace through strife (Phil. 4:6-7), contentment through circumstances (Phil. 4:10-13), and joy through sorrows (2 Cor. 11:23-30; Phil. 3:1). er.

Paul suffered more than we realize typically, yet he gloried in what he went through because it brought others to Christ and strengthened his faith (2 Cor. 12:9-10). The Christian life is not one of ease (1 Pet. 3:13-17), but by the example Paul left, we have no need to fret.

Is Christ your priority? If so, you can have an unbreakable bond with other Christians that will give more encouragement than anything imaginable. It will bring peace if your life is filled with turmoil, contentment if you've lost everything, and joy if you're surrounded by sorrows. There is no better life than the one with Christ as its center.

About Upright Woman

The Upright Woman publication is intended to educate, promote, and encourage the women of the church to strive for righteousness in every aspect of life. It is the mission of this publication to provide women an opportunity to study the word and share articles about various issues and topics to encourage us to be upright women in an upside down world.

**“FOR THE LORD IS RIGHTEOUS; HE
LOVES RIGHTEOUS DEEDS; THE
UPRIGHT SHALL BEHOLD HIS FACE.”
PSALM 11:7**



We pray that with every issue and with every article all glory is given to God.