

A Mighty Redwood/ Martha – “Me, Busy?” (Part 1)

Lesson 8

BEING TRUE TO YOUR PRIORITIES

11/8/15

Selecting the best nutrients for growth. *A mighty redwood thrives in rich, well-watered soil.*

Stephen Covey writes about “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People”, and says that “change starts from within”. He defines three stages of transition:

- Dependence: The paradigm under which we are born, relying upon others to take care of us.
- Independence: The paradigm under which we can make our own decisions and take care of ourselves.
- Interdependence: The paradigm under which we cooperate to achieve something that cannot be achieved independently.

Principle: *“Busyness is the enemy of God. A life of frenzied activity is likely to lead us to accumulate skills for personal achievement but neglect to cultivate godly character and virtue. We should order our priorities so that we give our best time and effort to what matters most.” – Fran Sciacca*

“The best solution to the Mary/Martha syndrome is to be both! Do the “Martha thing” ahead of time – have the plan in place (crock-pot, table set, etc.), and when Jesus gets there be “totally Mary” and focus on Him.” – Trisha Kinnoin

Bible Character: MARTHA

Background: During Jesus’ last year on earth He frequented a home on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem. Bethany was out-of-the-way and Martha welcomed Him. Perhaps widowed, her siblings Mary and Lazarus lived with her in her home (Luke 10:38). These three family members became precious to Jesus during the tension-filled final year of His life.

The Gospels of Luke and John contain our only information on this trio. Luke’s portrait of Martha could be true of many of us in our families – a woman whose life seemed to be defined by the number of tasks she was engaged in. For those of us living in a world that measures time in milliseconds, Martha stands as a reminder that being “too busy” isn’t merely unhealthy; it’s ungodly. (Taken from *To Stand and Not Be Moved* by Fran Sciacca.)

Scripture: Luke 10:38-42; John 12:1-3 (NIV)

10:38 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 only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

John

12:1 Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.
2 Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him.
3 Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Effective Habits of Highly Spiritual People

Stephen Covey wrote a book entitled, “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People”. Let’s compare his “habits” with God’s word. I’ve coined this Biblical viewpoint, “*Effective Habits of Highly Spiritual People*”.

Covey Habit #1 is “Be Proactive”. It states that change starts from within, and highly effective people make the decision to improve their lives through the things that they can influence rather than by reacting to external forces.

Do you ever react to external forces and regret it later? In Luke 10:38-42 Martha was D _____ by all the P _____. What was the problem with this? _____

- ▶ Isn't maximizing our time a good thing?

¹⁵ Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise,¹⁶ making the most of your time, because the days are evil. (Eph. 5:15-16 NASB)

What caution did Jesus give Mary to keep this in balance (vs. 42)? _____

- ▶ John 12:1-3 identifies a "highly effective" (i.e. "highly spiritual") action by Mary (anointing Jesus' feet with perfume). What lays at the core of her action that so pleased Jesus (see vs. 7-8)?
-

Covey Habit #3 is "Put First Things First", which is defined as spending time doing what fits into your personal mission, observing the proper balance between production and building production capacity, identifying the key roles that you take on in life, and making time for each of them.

Matthew 6:33 is worth highlighting:

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

- ▶ How does this teaching by the Lord apply to the demands others are currently placing on you?
-

Discussion: Good or Best?

Martha was so blinded to what was really important that she became angry at her sister Mary, who *did* recognize what was happening around her. The Greek word for "distracted" in Luke 10:40 means to be sliced up into pieces, or be pulled from every direction at the same time. The verb form here indicates that Martha's activity was going on continually, not merely a momentary burst.

Does it bother you when you're trying to talk to someone and they don't look at you, and perhaps are doing something else at the same time (such as texting)? It's easy to get our focus on tasks that we consider important or even "godly" and not see the Lord and His purpose in how we use our time. Referring to Luke 10:38-40 again, answer the following questions:

1. *Was Martha's primary focus on her guest or her tasks? Explain.*
2. *Do you think that Martha saw this visit as an opportunity or an intrusion?*
3. *It has been said that "good" is often the enemy of the "best". How do you see the scene at Martha's house illustrating that statement?*

Bonus/Personal

Suppose the Lord "called" you on the phone tonight and said He needed you to do something for Him that would take an entire day. Look at your calendar right now. How long would He have to wait until you were "free" to do what He needed?

Next Time: Martha – "Me, Busy?" (Part 2) / *Being True to Your Priorities*