

# The One Thing (No Team Jesus member must forget)

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Preacher: Brian King

[ 0 : 00 ] Let us pray. Indeed, Lord, speak as we come to you to receive the food of your holy word. Shape and fashion us in your likeness and help us to glorify you and worship you in all that we do. In the name of Jesus, we pray.

Amen. You've heard the story before. The characters might change, but the shape of the story remains distressingly the same. A mum or a dad are on their way to work and they've got an 18-month-old in their car.

But just as they reach the nursery or the daycare, the phone rings and the parent, already feeling a little frazzled from recent stresses at work, takes the call.

And as the preoccupations of the day fill their minds, they forget to drop their kid off. Instead, they drive straight to work, get out, and leave the toddler in the car, strapped to their car seat.

[ 1 : 09 ] And it's only hours later before they realise what has happened, by which time it is usually too late. They've forgotten the one thing, the one person they must not forget.

And the tragic thing is, forgetting this one thing has serious consequences. Now that is the kind of stakes that are involved in today's Bible story.

You see, you know that we are currently in a series of what it means to be on Team Jesus. And so far, what has Luke shown us? He's shown us that being on Team Jesus requires leaving, as we say goodbye, to material security of family, first above everything else.

Now that's Luke 9, 51-62. Then he's shown us it requires evangelising, as we go on mission for Jesus to tell others about him. That's Luke 10, 1-24.

And it requires caring, as we learn not to limit whom we love, but be a neighbour, even as we receive the love of the true good Samaritan himself, Jesus.

[ 2 : 25 ] That's Luke 10, 25-37. So being on Team Jesus is very much a very active undertaking. But just before Luke concludes Chapter 10, he says, hang on a minute, actually there is one more thing I need to show you.

And you mustn't ever forget this. Because if you do, the consequences are serious. It could be as tragic as a forgotten toddler.

That would be horrible, right? So friends, Luke says, let's make sure we don't forget. And the way I'm going to do that is by telling you a little story.

I'll tell you about two women who are exemplary in their own way. And then I'll tell you about the one pressing issue that comes up. And from there, we will discover the one important thing that no Team Jesus member must ever forget.

So let's start with these two model women. Now Jesus, you might remember, is on a journey. He has set his face to go to Jerusalem.

[ 3 : 35 ] But along the way, he decides to make a temporary stop. He comes to the home of Martha and Mary. Now it seems as if Jesus knows this family.

Elsewhere, John 11 suggests that this wouldn't be the first time Jesus stopped by. And indeed, the way that Martha and Jesus talk to each other suggests a comfortable familiarity with one another.

And we're told, verse 38, that Martha opened her home to Jesus. She welcomed him in. Now, if you have heard Luke chapter 10, verse 38 to 42 before, as I'm sure many of us have, it's easy to immediately categorise Mary as the hero of the story and Martha as the villain.

But I want to show you that it is not as black and white as all that. You see, what Martha does is significant. Remember the wider context.

Do you remember what Jesus said to his disciples back in Luke chapter 10, verse 5 to 9? As they enter the different villages and houses, they will experience both welcome and rejection.

[ 4 : 55 ] And that welcome or rejection is tied to whether they are offered hospitality or not. Because during that time, who you aid with is a big deal.

It signified recognition, acceptance, appreciation. And Martha, by welcoming Jesus in, is really picking a side.

She's saying, Jesus, I'm with you. I'm on team Jesus. I'm happy for this to be known. And in doing so, Martha is being a model disciple.

She has opened her home to Jesus. And it's worth pausing briefly here and asking, is that me too? Am I someone who literally welcomes Jesus into my home?

Would I embrace his presence there such that he clearly shapes its routines and its culture? Or more figuratively speaking, am I someone who welcomes Jesus into the home of my heart?

[ 6 : 01 ] Would I be happy to show publicly that I am on team Jesus? Now those are all questions worth asking ourselves. And Martha doesn't just welcome Jesus.

She starts serving him. Jesus is the guest of honour and he must be honoured. She wants to serve him the best.

And that is a commendable attitude too. It is certainly the attitude of a model disciple. Team Jesus members serve Jesus.

That's what we do. Following Jesus is serving Jesus. And again, it's worth briefly asking, do I know that?

Do I practice that? Do I show that Jesus is my master by my service to him? Am I willing to do the tasks and duties that he has given me to do?

[ 7 : 02 ] So, that's Martha. But what about the younger sister? Mary. What is she up to? Verse 39 tells us, she sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said.

Now, that should immediately make the audience sit up. Pun intended. You see, Mary isn't sitting at Jesus' feet because it's a bit squashy and there is nowhere else to sit.

Rather, she is doing what is not customary. To sit at someone's feet is to become his pupil, his disciple. Back in Luke chapter 8, after the demon-possessed man is healed, we find him similarly sitting at Jesus' feet.

It is a way of signifying, this is the man I follow. But, the thing is, that's not normally a place where you find a woman.

During that time, while it was not completely forbidden, it seems as if women were discouraged from receiving such instruction. But, it's no problem for Jesus.

[ 8 : 19 ] After all, what is she doing as she sits at his feet? She's listening to Jesus' words. And so, Mary is showing she too is a model disciple.

She's certainly a contrast to the lawyer from last week who stood up with no intention of listening to Jesus. In fact, she's doing exactly what God wants us to do.

Back in Luke chapter 9, just before Jesus sets out for Jerusalem, do you remember what happened? Jesus went up with some of his disciples to a mountain and he was transfigured.

And, as he stood up there in glory, the voice of God came booming out, saying, this is my son, whom I have chosen, listen to him.

And that is exactly what we find Mary doing. She is giving him her full attention and submission. And just as an aside, I think this helps us see what women's ministry should be all about.

[ 9 : 34 ] Perhaps within our denominational circles, women's ministry can sometimes be relegated to just doing some cooking or making things for events, but actually we should be making sure that the women, as much as the men, are being well-grounded in God's word to hold it out to others.

And that's why we've been trying out things like the women's discipleship groups that we've just heard about. And so, right at the beginning, we have not one, but two model women, Martha and Mary.

And together, they form a picture of what it means to be on team Jesus. It means welcoming and serving him, and it means listening to him.

And that is a pretty good diagnostic test for us this morning, you know. Not sure if you are a team Jesus guy or girl? Well, are you doing these three things?

But that is not the end of the story, in fact. It's just the beginning. Because now we have one pressing issue. One pressing issue.

[10:51] As Martha gets on with serving her, mind starts racing. There are so many things to do. There's the cleaning of the dining area, there's the buying of the ingredients, there's all the chopping and cooking to sort out, not to mention the preparation of the fresh clean sheets for the bed, and the taking out of the trash.

Ever had that experience when you needed to prepare the arrival of some VIP at your school maybe, or at some work event? Everything has to be just right.

And that's probably how Martha felt. I mean, this is Jesus we're talking about. This is the V, V, V, VIP.

The Lord. Notice how that word Lord is repeated quite a number of times in just five verses. So we need to make sure that everything is just right. Everything must be absolutely excellent.

Excellence for Jesus, remember? Isn't that what we should aim for in our ministry? So, worship band, let's make sure we keep practicing until each note is pitch perfect. ushers, let's make sure that everyone knows where their place is and what exactly to say.

[12:08] Preachers, make sure that your message is funny, moving, inspirational, substantial, challenging, and just all around incredible at all times. It's all for Jesus. That is us in Martha mode, isn't it?

And there is a noble impulse in all that. We should be ready to go all out to serve Jesus. But now here comes the pressing issue.

Martha thinks, if we are going all out, we need all hands on deck. So, Mary, Mary, where are you? Oh, wait. She's still seated. She hasn't moved. She's still listening. She's entirely absorbed with Jesus. And even though this story is short, you can already feel Martha's frustration building in the background.

Hello, Mary, a little help, please. Perhaps Martha makes sure to bang the pots and the pans just a little louder in the kitchen, hoping that Mary will catch the hint.

[13:30] Or perhaps she even peeked out of the kitchen, making some furious gestures towards Mary to offer a little help. But no reaction. Mary's eyes and ears are solely focused on Jesus.

And so finally, Martha can't take it anymore. Verse 40, she goes, not to Mary, but to Jesus. And us, complains really.

Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me. And actually, as the audience, all our sympathies are with Martha.

Don't we all just hate it when we seem to be doing all the work, and that person over there doesn't seem to be lifting a finger? Don't we just hate it when it seems like we're the ones doing all the worrying, but those people over there only seem to be doing all the enjoying?

And the original audience of look probably would find their sympathies with Martha too. Don't forget, Martha is doing exactly what she's expected to do.

[14:55] The social norms of the day meant that women in particular would be getting ready the food. But Mary, on the other hand, doesn't fit with what society expects her to do.

She is at Jesus' feet. So, if anything, if you were there, you would say, Mary is the one who is distracted from what she's supposed to be doing.

That's the pressing issue. Or is it? Because let's look at verse 40 again. And we are indeed told someone is distracted.

But it's not Mary. It's Martha. And that is the shock of the passage.

In verses 38 and 39, both are model women. Both are model disciples. models. But in verse 40, for the first time, a direct contrast is drawn between the two.

[16:11] And it is Martha, we're told, not Mary, who is distracted. She has been distracted, verse 40 tells us, by all the preparations that had to be made.

More literally, she is distracted by much serving, as the ESV translation puts it. Martha has been serving, like many of us who serve in the Sunday school, or youth ministry, or social concerns, or in the library, or with the music, or with counting the money, or with teaching English to Chinese nationals, and so many other ways besides.

But now, serving has pulled her away. that's another way to translate that word distracted. Her service is pulling her away from what is most important.

And I think we can all see ourselves in Martha. I know I certainly can. You see, I'm sure most of us began serving because we love Jesus, and so we wanted to love our neighbor.

that's why we said yes to helping out with the kids. That's why we agreed to be trained to be Bible study leaders. But it's not long before we get distracted.

[ 17 : 40 ] We get distracted by the difficulties of ministry. We encounter naughty and rowdy children. Maybe we find the poor people that we're trying to help not as compliant as we like.

or we get distracted by the work of the ministry itself. In our efforts to lead the Bible study, or even to preach a sermon, we forget Jesus himself.

We forget to pray, or even to listen to the passage we are studying, ironically. And I can speak from personal experience.

And the thing is, distraction can so easily spark off a chain reaction. As we begin to think more and more about our service, all of its challenges, all of its difficulties, all of its complications, we can become worried and anxious.

And these anxieties preoccupies. How can I serve God in that friendship, when that friendship is not going well at the moment?

[ 18 : 58 ] How can I serve God with my parenting, when my kids don't seem to be like anyone else's kids? And as we think more and more about how much effort we are putting in, we are soon moved to self-pity.

we stop thinking of our service as being for Jesus, but more about how that ministry is working out or not working out for us.

And then that moves us to resentment. That's when we don't just feel sorry for ourselves, but we start blaming others. And you can see precisely that chain reaction in Martha, can't you?

Notice the language she uses in verse 40. Don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself?

Notice the my, the me, and the by myself? Martha has become inward focused and self-pitying. And then notice the tone of resentment.

[ 20 : 06 ] It's not just against Mary, it's against Jesus himself. Don't you care, Jesus? Don't you see me slaving away by myself?

Don't you see my hard work of service? So Jesus, you better do something about it. And notice how in that moment Martha treats Jesus.

She's no longer welcoming or serving Jesus, but commanding Jesus. Tell her to help me. She asks Jesus to serve her.

Martha. But let's not be harsh on Martha because if I'm honest, how many times have I done the same?

It's so easy. One moment we are joyfully giving our all to the Lord as we serve in preparing the lesson plans or the slides for Sunday. the next moment we find ourselves asking why aren't more people as committed as I am?

[ 21 : 10 ] And then in the very next moment we can start dictating to God what he should and shouldn't do. We have an agenda for God. It can happen so fast.

And why does it happen? Because we have become distracted with much serving. But one thing I haven't made clear yet is what exactly is Martha distracted from?

That's the real pressing issue. What is she being pulled away from that she shouldn't be? Well remember what Mary is doing?

She's spending time with Jesus himself listening to Jesus you could even say she's wasting time with Jesus and that is the one important thing that no team Jesus member must ever forget.

It is to be with Jesus sitting at his feet listening to him. It is to seek the one our soul loves to behold him.

[ 22 : 29 ] It is to see the king in his beauty and draw close to him. That is the one thing no team Jesus member must forget.

As Jesus says gently to Martha in verse 42, that is the better thing. Now let's clarify.

Jesus is not saying that listening replaces serving. In church history, one of the ways that this passage has been interpreted is to see it as saying that the monastic life, the contemplative life, is somehow superior to an active full life.

But Jesus never ever rebukes Martha for her service. In fact, he doesn't even ask Martha to stop serving. Serving is good.

Serving is needed. Serving characterises team Jesus. This is not a word for people not serving Jesus to continue not serving Jesus.

[ 23 : 43 ] But neither is Jesus saying listening and serving are just two different things that different disciples do. Occasionally you hear that some of us are Martha and some of us are Mary's it's purely down to personality and so if you are a Martha who serves be a Martha and if you are Mary who is the more meditative type then you do that but no Mary's will also serve and Martha will also listen instead Jesus' point is this we should never let our service for Jesus ever get to the point where it overwhelms our listening to Jesus we should never ever get so busy for Jesus that we never sit at the feet of

Jesus if we ever get to the point where our activity for Jesus is pulling us away from Jesus himself no matter how excellent it is we have missed the point listening to Jesus and spending time with him must always take precedence and yes even in the midst of our busy service and that is what Jesus wants Martha to know notice his gentleness with her verse 41 Martha Martha the Lord answered you are worried and upset about many things now notice the way our Lord deals with her he says Martha I know your burden I understand and it's all coming out in your words that's why you say what you say against me against your sister words that you probably regret later and that's the tenderness of our

Lord on display isn't it he doesn't guilt trip her instead he acknowledges what is really going on in her heart you are worried and upset he is indeed our high priest who sympathizes and when you are weighed down by your service to him to the point where you might say some careless words this is how Jesus deals with you he knows he understands but of course Jesus doesn't just move with sympathy towards us that's just the first step he wants to change us too and so he says to mother verse 42 few things are needed or indeed only one you see Jesus says in the end what will cure our restless hearts only one thing listening to him relating to him without that our service will eventually degenerate into something

I do just for the sake of it rather than to make the one I love smile in the end a lifetime of genuine and steadfast service can only flow out of a life that is spent delighting in and communing with Jesus and that is the big implication of this passage spending time listening to Jesus is necessary not optional but why do we still resist why do we still choose not to set aside time with our Lord I think that is all our experience isn't it I had a thing about that this week and could it be in part because we feel it isn't productive we are already time poor we feel that there are so many other important things to do first and time listening to

Jesus in his word and praying well that doesn't feel productive at all doesn't seem to bring any results that might be one reason perhaps another reason is because it feels like an extra burden well we're already weighed down so much by the cares and worries of life and spending time with Jesus in his word feels like another crushing obligation another extra thing to add on top of the many other extra things that are already on my to-do list that are calling for my attention and perhaps one more reason we are afraid to spend time with Jesus is we worry that he'll be disappointed spending time with him means letting him into the homes of our hearts and our lives and well our lives and our hearts might look well decorated on the outside but if you come inside you might find it messier than a teenager's bedroom and we worry

[ 29 : 36 ] Jesus won't like what he sees we worry that you'll see our wandering minds our fumbling words or how slow we are to understand stuff and that he'll shake his head in disappointment but Jesus says if those are your concerns no worries let me address them starting with the last one first let me take you to Isaiah 57 verse 15 on the screen Isaiah 57 on the screen now notice where does our Lord live in a high and holy place yes but not just there he also lives with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit so if that is you

Jesus says that means I will feel right at home regardless of the mess I wouldn't be disappointed you are exactly who I want to spend time with and so if you're happy to spend time with me I'm more than happy to spend time with you and Jesus says well if you've been reading Luke so far you know that is true don't you it is precisely the lowly and the contrite who I've been spending all my time with and I want you to know Jesus says that I will never be just another troublesome thing for you to have to check off your to do list because look at Isaiah 57 again the Lord says I have come to revive you I don't intend to lay extra burdens on you if that is also your concern I have come to give you rest for what if

I tell you that spending time with me is not like another item on your to-do list what what what if it is actually about discovering a greater sense of my love and a deeper appreciation of my grace what if it is actually about learning the extent of my goodness and the range of my power in fact wouldn't it

be sad Jesus asked if you only serve me without ever enjoying me you'll be as the 17th century pastor Richard Baxter once put it like a tailor who makes lovely expensive clothes for others but only wear rags themselves or like a cook who makes the most delicious meals for others but never tastes them themselves and Jesus says that's not what I want for you because what is the Bible really it isn't just mere words or data it is

God revealing himself it is God speaking to help you bear the burden of your to-do list it is God speaking to refresh you to tackle that to-do list it is God speaking perhaps even empowering you to change your to-do list so let's spend time with Jesus let's not rush it the writer Carl Honorare once tells a story he was at the airport and while waiting he discovered the existence of a book called One Minute Bedtime Stories and what this book had done was to condense classic children's stories like Jack and the Beanstalk into 60 second sound bites and Honorare thought at last a simple way to put my kids to bed quickly but then he caught himself wait a minute why am I so obsessed about optimizing my time is it not better that I grab every opportunity to spend time with my son and pursue intimacy with him instead why would I want just one minute of that when I can have many more minutes that's exactly how we want to listen to Jesus we want to spend as many precious minutes with him as we can not just when we are not busy but especially when we are busy because that is when we are most likely to be distracted and become worried and upset and I am preaching to myself here just as much as you you see before I'm a pastor I am a human first I get overwhelmed too and I am a follower of Jesus first before

[ 34 : 49 ] I am a leader and so I need to hear this myself and if this is what Jesus says that means it is right to sometimes make myself unavailable to you so that I am listening to and communing with Jesus first in his word and that also means that whenever we run training sessions for whatever ministry where I'm opening the word for you we should make that a priority we shouldn't say I'm too busy because what we are really doing is simply listening to Jesus together and he's making a meal for us so let's spend time with Jesus he wants to feed us to sustain us but the perceptive among you might have noticed that I still haven't addressed one of the objections what about when time in the word doesn't feel productive at all well that brings me to the last implication that

I want to bring out this morning spending time with Jesus will never ever be a waste spending time with Jesus will never ever be a waste look again at verse 42 Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her again the ESV translation puts it more literally Mary has chosen the good portion which will not be taken away from her in other words Jesus says both Mary and Matar are concerned about food but they're not concerned about the same kind of food and it is Mary who has chosen the better portion why because this food will last it will not be taken away from her and it doesn't last like plastic straws now you know how plastic straws work right we use it once and then it gets thrown away but the problem is that it degrades really slowly and becomes an environmental hazard for the next 200 years but

Jesus says my word is different it won't damage you or the world but instead it will produce growth and maturity and transformation it is stuff that will last for our good if you choose Jesus and his word it will never be taken from you that is his promise last week I happened to read of the story of someone called Luke Short he was 15 years old when he listened to a famous preacher of his time John Fleville he heard the gospel but it didn't reach his heart so he remained an unbeliever now Short despite his name lived a very long life and when he was 100 years old the Lord suddenly prompted him to remember this sermon 85 years ago and this time it cut him to the heart as he realized the day of judgment was nearer than he thought and he became a Christian amazingly he lived on for another 16 years and served Jesus faithfully in that time just imagine that now the preacher Fleville was long dead by then but that word he preached lasted and indeed eventually bore through nearly a century later that is the nature of Jesus' words listening to Jesus will never ever be a waste so today what is the one thing no team Jesus member must forget there are many things but only one thing is needed it is to spend time listening to Jesus and not let our service pull us away from that one thing and so today what is the one or two things you might need to change in your life for that to be achieved what might need to be cut out from your life to create more space for

Jesus why not spend some time reflecting on that maybe talking to someone else about it put in some measures make sure that it happens so let us pause now for a few seconds think about that and then we will pray father thank you for your word thank you it is a word that is living that is active that is enduring that it is actually you speaking to us so we pray now that we would listen we would

hear that we would be like

[ 40 : 41 ] Mary sitting at your feet listening to what you have to say and we pray Lord that where we have allowed our service to pull us away from you we ask for your forgiveness and we want to repent we want to turn away from those distractions and turn back to you and Father if we need to take certain concrete steps if there are things in our lives that need to change help us to have the courage to change that knowing that it is all worth it and so we pray all this in the name of Jesus Christ Amen