

Luke 10:38-42**At the Home of Martha and Mary**

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 few things are needed—or indeed only one.^[a] Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

As a kid, my reputation caused me so much anxiety. I wanted everyone to know that I was a good kid. I hated getting in trouble. I wanted to live up to, and exceed everyone's expectations. I hated feeling like my parents or teachers were disappointed with me or that I let them down, and if I did feel like that I would work extra hard to prove myself to them again. This translated over to my spiritual life as well. I assumed Jesus was just like everyone else. I had to prove myself to him, and live up to his expectations. Unfortunately I wasted a lot of time with this inaccurate view of his expectations. I have had many conversations with other Christians who have the same misconception. As we've talked about how our faith affects our lives, and our eternities, so many people have said to me "I think I'm going to heaven. I'm pretty good. I've done a lot of good things, and I haven't killed anybody!" Our society is so performance based. We think in order to be "in" with Jesus we need to perform for him.

While I do believe "doing stuff" has its place, it is not Jesus' desire for our lives. He's not Santa. He wants our relationship with him to go much deeper than just trying to do good things in case he's watching. All that does is make us worried and anxious, because we never know if we have done enough. We can never live up to the perfect example Jesus set for us, making none of us deserving of eternal life with Christ, which is scary. We like to think Heaven is something we earn or deserve, but if that were true none of us would make it. Luckily, Jesus says only one thing is needed, and that thing is not doing all the things WE feel we need to do. That one thing is what Mary chose. She chose to sit at Christ's feet and listen.

As I studied this story, I realized there were so many things I was doing to make myself feel secure and accepted by Christ. Everything I did was not out of love for Jesus, or because I wanted others to experience his love, it was because I wanted to boost my spiritual self-esteem, and move closer to the top of the "nice list." It was distracting me from the true purpose of my existence. I also realized that God has given me specific gifts and passions in order to bring Him glory, and only He knows how I can be most effective using them. Ephesians 2:10 says "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Are works important? Yes, but God made us each different, and has a specific purpose for us. Martha was distracted by the responsibilities of being a host. Maybe she was making a

bed for Jesus, or cooking him supper. The problem is, she doesn't even know if he is tired or hungry. Mary chose to listen. Don't you think she would have gotten Jesus a glass of water in an instant had he asked for it? How can we know what needs he wants us to fill if we never listen to him.

Over the last year and a half this has become an increasingly important part of my life. I remember sitting at a weekend retreat at Inspiration Hills. The focus of the night was on missions. The reality is that Jesus has called all Christians to go and make disciples of all nations. In Isaiah we are commanded to "Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted." It is easy for us to ignore these verses, but fully embrace scriptures such as "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you," and "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." I remember realizing that I had been making scripture fit my wants and needs, rather than listening to Christ's call, and spending my life filling a greater need that impacts eternity. After that realization Christ continued to change my perspective on this short time I'm given on earth. Rather than wasting my energy on securing an eternity in heaven, I could use it to share the gospel with others and change their lives forever.

I had been challenged to take a step of faith and sign up for a six-week trip to East Asia the following summer which would focus on building relationships with Asian students in hopes of sharing our lives, and the gospel with them. I began to struggle, because I wanted to obey Jesus' call on my life, but I didn't know if this was really Him calling me or just my own wants. The whole time I could not stop thinking about the millions of people in Asia who have no access to the gospel, and the reality that the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. I finally stepped out in faith and decided to commit to the trip. What I learned about faith through this experience is that Faith is not being 100% sure about something. Faith is being 90% sure and diving in head first. But for those of you who know anything about my GPA and grades, you know that a 75% is good enough for me.

Christ continued to change me in Asia. I had the opportunity to share the story of Jesus and the love of Jesus with people who had never even heard his name before. Many were absolutely thrilled to learn that Jesus loved them so much, that He was willing to die for them though they did nothing to deserve it. I experienced so much joy as Christ used me to make an eternal impact in Asia, and had I not listened to Christ and his call, I would have missed out on everything he showed me there.

As I came back to the States and headed into my senior year I began to seriously think about my future as graduation was rapidly approaching. I believe God led me into nursing school, and has a purpose for the training I have received here at Augustana. However, when it comes to my career I need to make sure I listen to the Lord and follow His call on my life above any of my own ambitions. I have been praying and seeking the Lord about my future all year, and he has led me to take another step of faith and apply to spend a year on staff with Campus Crusade for Christ.

There is a lot of uncertainty that comes with this decision, but I know that the Lord is faithful, and he will be with me every step of the way as I am obedient to Him. I look forward to how the Lord will continue to lead me and strengthen me in my faith as I continue to listen to Him and his call for my life, rather than trying to figure out what is right on my own.

Listening to the Lord takes patience and discipline, but I have experienced so much joy and fulfillment since surrendering my future to Him, and letting go of the distractions of what the world tells me I should do. I believe Christ has created each of us for a purpose. He has called us to something greater than we could ever imagine, and I encourage you to ask the Lord to remove any distractions keeping you from hearing his voice, and listen to what he may be calling you to.