

Being Still in a Busy House



By Kim Butts

If your home is like most, life can be hectic. You often wonder, “What did I accomplish today?” Perhaps there were constant interruptions which kept you from things you were determined to complete, and your “to do” list got longer instead of shorter. Or, it could be that you spent much of your time chasing after little ones, or driving children from activity to activity. Maybe you are determined at the end of each day that you will spend your time more wisely so that you can accomplish more tomorrow. If this sounds familiar, then take a minute to stop and reflect on these questions:

- Did my activities today accomplish anything for the Lord?
- Did my striving today please the Father?
- Did anything I focused on today draw me closer to the heart of God?
- Did I become more like Jesus today than I was yesterday?

- Was I a good representative of Jesus Christ today? Did I reflect His character to my family, or to my co-workers?
- Was I obedient to do the things I know He wants me to be doing?

Have the other members of your family answer these questions also. If you are honest, this list probably caused you to stop and think. If your answer to any or all of these questions was, “No,” then it is time to re-evaluate what is important.

If in “doing” you are not accomplishing the plans and purposes of God, perhaps you are not spending enough time “being” the person He wants you to be. If our personal lives and the lives of our families do not reflect His glory through peace and joy, then we are out of balance spiritually, and most likely emotionally and physically as well. What would it take for your family to be different enough from the culture to live out who you are in Jesus Christ the way He has instructed us so clearly in His Word?

I want you to know that I’m writing this knowing that change must take place in my own life too. I’m too busy to be still, and yet, I must learn to “be” in the presence of Christ. My striving is separating me from His Presence – the one thing I desire most. So, together, let’s examine how we might wrestle our busyness to the ground and hold it down until it quits struggling to “do” more! We must learn to “be” more for Christ. Then all of our activity will flow naturally out of the overflow of our peace-filled, joyful, holy and blessed lives. Oh, how I long to function from the heart of Jesus and not from the drivenness of “doing” things for His kingdom. I believe we will all do more to advance the cause of Jesus by sitting at His feet rather than careening through life striving to accomplish more and more. How the enemy must be sitting back laughing in glee at God’s people surging through life rather than walking in constant awareness of Christ in us, “the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).

If we wish to live the way of Jesus Christ, then we must reflect upon the fact that nowhere in Scripture do we see Jesus in a hurry. The Son of God did not rush around. He did not look for more things to do. His example was one of patiently waiting upon the Father in prayer so that He could get His instructions for every step He took and every word He spoke. Is that how you and your family members live your lives? My guess is that if I were to live as Jesus did, focused upon His Word and connected to the Lord continually in the two-way love relationship that is prayer, I would accomplish more in less time, and be more contented. How about you?

Learning from Mary

We've all heard the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42, but let's take a closer look at the activities of these two sisters during this dinner gathering. Martha definitely had the gift of hospitality. She opened her home to Jesus and His entourage, then cooked and served a meal for all of them. However, Scripture says that Martha was "distracted by all the preparations that had to be made." She came to Jesus with the complaint, "Lord, don't You care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" Most of us are sympathetic toward the cause of Martha rather than aspiring to live our lives more like her sister, who sat at Jesus' feet with her eyes fixed upon His face – taking in every word He spoke. When Martha objected to what she perceived as laziness on Mary's part, Jesus gently rebuked her and said, "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." Ouch! Like Martha, I am often distracted by all of the things that need to be done. Like Martha, I am continually worried and upset about many things! Sitting at the Lord's feet sounds wonderful. It also sounds like something that should be done when one has time left over, and yet Jesus told Martha that just being in His presence was better than cooking in the kitchen, even if she

was doing it for Him.

Interestingly, a little over a week before the crucifixion, a similar dinner party took place. The location was once again at the home of Lazarus, Mary and Martha in honor of Jesus. You can read the full account in John 12:1-8. Scripture states that Martha once more was the one to serve the meal while Lazarus reclined at the table with Jesus and the disciples. However, this time Mary's role was different: "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" (John 12:3).

Let's look at the significance of Mary's simple act of devotion:

- **It was an extravagant act** – worth a year's wages, according to Judas Iscariot, who voiced objection to what he viewed as a waste of money on Mary's part. He asserted that the money should have been spent on the poor instead.
- **It was an unusual act** – Mary poured the perfume on Jesus' feet rather than His head, which was the usual custom. She also wiped His feet with her hair. Respectable women did not take down their hair in public.
- **It was a humble act** – generally, servants attended to the feet of visitors.
- **It was an obedient act** – Mary most likely had other plans for her expensive perfume; however, she felt compelled to offer this act of service. Her motivation could have been from gratitude. Jesus had recently raised her brother, Lazarus, from the dead. However, Jesus' response to Judas indicates that she was acting out of simple obedience to the Lord's purposes: "Leave her alone...It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of My burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have Me" (John 12:7-8).

Mary had no way of knowing that the crucifixion was just a few days away, and yet she acted as the Lord intended her to. She could have selfishly clung to her perfume, or she could have had a servant pour it on Jesus' feet. However, Mary did not refuse God because she had been spending time getting to know the character of her Messiah. Mary wasn't so busy "doing" that she missed the importance of "being."

King David understood this well. He wrote, "One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in His temple" (Psalm 27:4). He understood the importance of being. I often ask the Lord for strength to keep doing more and more for Him. Rarely do I humble myself before Him and truly seek His beautiful heart just for the sake of knowing Him more deeply. I am a busy kind of person. It's against my nature to sit still for too long of a time. And yet, my Lord says it is the most important discipline of all. So, I am determined to learn Mary's lesson of quieting my spirit, ceasing my busyness and just breathing in His loveliness.

Be Still

Being still does not require any activity on our part. Stillness is enjoying the presence of the Father without asking Him for anything. It is quieting our spirits, our minds and our emotions and simply resting.

- "But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me" (Psalm 131:2). A little child walks trustingly beside his mother, knowing that she will take care of all of his needs. This is the kind of trust we need to place in the Lord, casting all of our cares upon Him and being filled with peace.

- "Be still in the presence of the Lord, and wait patiently for Him" (Psalm 37:7a). Is it difficult for you to quiet your spirit...to just sit and soak in His beautiful presence?

- “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth” (Psalm 46:10). Cease your striving and acknowledge the God who has conquered through His Son, Jesus Christ. He is King of heaven and of earth. Worship Him!

- “The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still” (Exodus 14:14). You may ask, “What if I have lots to do – deadlines and responsibilities? How can I take time to just sit and do nothing?” You can take time if it is “divine” nothing. When the Israelites were being pursued by Pharaoh’s army they allowed themselves to be overwhelmed by their circumstance instead of filled with faith. They panicked and blamed their situation upon Moses. Although he must have been greatly irritated at their lack of faith, Moses calmed their fears and told them to set aside their fear. He urged them to let God deal with what seemed to be an impossible situation. Do you have an impossible situation to set aside today? Be still and let the Lord fight for you.

- “You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in You” (Isaiah 26:3). Does peace characterize the climate of your home today? Trust the Father without doubt or wavering and watch Him transform your family.

- “My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, He is my fortress, I will never be shaken...Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from Him” (Psalm 62:1-2, 5).

Listen and Obey What You Hear

It is impossible to do what the Lord desires unless we take time to listen to Him. We can only do this by being still and ceasing our busy activity-filled lives. Sometimes all God wants to speak to us are words of love and affirmation. Many times He may require nothing of you but to sit and enjoy His company. However, it is a very clear command from God that we are to listen to His Son: “Then a cloud appeared and enveloped

them, and a voice came from the cloud: 'This is My Son, whom I love. Listen to Him!'" (Mark 9:7). It is implied that listening involves obeying. Truly hearing God is to be obedient to what He says: "Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" (James 1:22).

Jesus expressed confidence that those who will be still before Him will live lives that are filled with divine "doing" that is birthed out of divine "being": "My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:27-28). Your children are watching how you live your life. Are they learning the lifestyle of Martha...or Mary? "...Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42).

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