

REFERENCE POINT

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Only One Thing

“But only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”
(Luke 10:42 NASB)

If someone were to ask me about characteristics of librarians, one thought that comes to mind is that librarians are “helpers!” One only has to observe the ACL discussion list to notice how willing librarians are to assist one another. This is not true of all occupations. Librarians, however, seem to truly enjoy helping and serving. This is a commendable trait. Our desire to serve, however, may lead to overtime, long “to do” lists, and taking on additional responsibilities. We can become frustrated, overworked, and anxious about getting everything done. Listen to the words of Jesus in Luke 10: 41-42 when Martha asked him to tell Mary to assist her in preparing the meal for her guests:

“Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken from her.”

I’m sure Jesus could say the same thing to me that he said to Martha. As I look back on my career as a librarian, I realize I have been very task-oriented. This isn’t necessarily a bad thing. Martha was doing a good thing too: preparing a meal for her guests. But if Jesus says “only one thing is necessary,” shouldn’t we be paying attention to what that one thing is? What had Mary chosen to do? The Bible indicates that Mary was “sitting at Jesus’ feet.” This phrase was often used in Bible times for students or disciples of a specific rabbi.

Mary was listening, learning, focusing on what Jesus had to say. She was enjoying spending time with him. Philip Ryken in his commentary on Luke states:

But what we do for Jesus is not the heart of our relationship with him. He prizes our friendship and our fellowship more highly than all our service. . . . The good portion is Jesus himself. (*Reformed Expository Commentary*, Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2009, p. 562)

For most of my life, I felt that I needed to show my love and gratitude to Christ by doing something for him through serving others. He does call us to serve, but not necessarily at the expense of spending very little time with him—listening and learning. According to the Westminster Confession, the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. Even in the midst of serving, may we seek time to enjoy fellowship with Jesus and invest in that which will never be taken away from us.



—Dianne Zandbergen

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