

# The CORE TEACHINGS of JESUS

## The Relationship Is More Important Than the Task

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Hello men, and welcome to another episode of the Man in the Mirror Bible Study. For those of you online, I'm Pat Morley. Today we're going to be talking about the topic the *relationship is more important than the task*. Please turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 10, verse 38. Luke chapter 10, verse 38.

So the arc of this series, it's the core teachings of Jesus, and we began with talking about the question what is it that is holding men back from taking action? We talked about how Jesus has compassion on people because the harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. And then he asks that we would pray for workers to go out into the harvest field. So there is a mission. He came to seek and to save the lost.

Then the last time we were together, we talked about the most important thing, which is to love God with all of our hearts, soul, mind, and strength, everything that is within us. So now we come to an interesting place. We need to figure out which is more important, the relationship, loving God, or the task, going out into the harvest field? Well, it's not an either or proposition, is it? Of course not.

However, most men would be more task oriented by nature and would tend to gravitate to doing the task by nature. Women build relationships face to face. Men tend to build relationships shoulder to shoulder doing a mission together, and along the way we build the relationship.

I remember as a new Christian, not having ever been taught or seen it modeled that the relationship is the most important thing. I assumed that if I wanted to make God happy, that I needed to be all in. I needed to be going 110 miles an hour 24/7 kind of doing good works and not to mention that the church that I grown up in seemed to make it sound like that's what it meant to be a good Christian.

Then I got burned out. I just got burned out. The reason that I got burned out I later realized is that I didn't have enough Jesus for myself, much less enough left over to give away to other people. So I found myself at a men's retreat in Windy Gap, North Carolina. I slept through half the sessions because I was so tired, but I heard a man there named Tom Skinner who talked about the power of relationships. He talked about the kingdom of God. He talked about what it meant to love God, what it meant to love people, and how the priority is on the relationship with God, not what we do for God. And it changed my life. He and I actually ended up becoming best friends.

The passage today reflects that core teaching of Jesus. So we're going to look at it.

### **DISTRACTION OFTEN COMES DISGUISED AS OPPORTUNITY**

The theme here is the first thing we're going to look at. Distraction often comes disguised as opportunity. Let's read the passage together.

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. So she had a sister called Mary. But Martha owned the home. She was the

responsible one. She was probably the older sister. These were the two sisters of Lazarus who later would be raised from the dead. This is the same Mary who took a pint of perfume and poured it on the feet of Jesus and then wiped off his feet with her hair preparing his body for burial.

She had a sister called Mary who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. So what he said, this is the word *logos* from which we get word. Some of the translations will render this listening to his teaching. His discipleship. So Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus letting Jesus disciple her, teach her.

But Martha was more properly concerned with the preparations that needed to be made.

Is anybody looking at the Bible? It doesn't say that, does it? It says, "But Martha was distracted." Martha was distracted by all the preparations. This word distracted literally means to be drawn away. Martha was drawn away from Jesus by all of the preparations that had to be made. In my verse, it says they had to be made. I mean, they had to eat, right?

So it's not like food wasn't part of the deal. The word preparations here is the word *diaconia*. It comes from the exact same word family from which we get the word *deacon*. So a deacon is someone who serves. It's the same word family from which we get the spiritual gift of service. All of the four passages in the Bible that deal with spiritual gifts. It's this word. So obviously this is something valuable and something worthwhile. The issue is not the *diaconia*. The issue is that Martha was distracted from being discipled by Jesus.

She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care?" Anytime you say to God, "Lord, don't you care," you know it's time for a break, right? "Oh, Martha. No, no. I didn't see that one coming." "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me. Tell her to help me." So watch this. Martha is asking Jesus to triangle with her against her sister, to choose her side over her sister.

So we've had a famine of God's word for about 400 years. God himself has now come, Jesus, and he's speaking. Martha's in the kitchen making dinner and upset that her sister is spending time with Jesus. So how does Jesus respond? Now this is very important to us as a core teaching because as of now we know that we should be aching for the harvest, and we know we should be loving God. But Jesus has not really given a teaching over how we prioritize those two things.

Now Jesus is going to give us something that is a clarification for how these two contrasting ideas, serving and *diaconia* service and *Logos* the teachings or abiding if you want, how those two things relate.

So verse 41, "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "You're right. I should've had her come and help you." He says, "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 from her." Mary has chosen what is better. Mary has chosen literally the good part. Mary has chosen the good part. Only one thing is needed, and it will not be taken from her.

I'm reading from the 1984 NIV, the new NIV changes that a little bit. This is actually more of a word for word translation of what the Greek manuscripts say but only one thing is needed. And Mary has chosen what's better, and it won't be taken from her.

So Jesus has now clarified that the relationship is more important than the task. Martha has been distracted. Distraction often comes disguised as opportunity. You would think that that was a tremendous thing that she was doing, a tremendous opportunity to serve God in this way.

So the question for you, the question for me is... You can identify with Martha, right? I mean, my job is all consuming. I don't have a lot of extra time to spend with God. I mean, I want to spend time with God, but I have an all consuming job. Or maybe I'm very ambitious and I have lots of plans. So I don't have time. Or I have little kids running around the house all the time, so I don't really have a lot of extra time

to spend with Jesus. Or maybe you're just distracted. Maybe you have some kind of an avocation or something.

Maybe instead of spending time with God, maybe it's Christian service but maybe it's tinkering with a car late in the wee hours of the night. So you're too tired in the morning to spend any time with God because you're up late at night with your hobby. Or maybe you just don't think it's really going to make that much difference. So you're not really putting the time into it because you don't... Your heart really believe that spending that time with God is really going to make much difference in how your life turns out. Or maybe you're just so caught up in cashflow problems and overextension. You're just so worried about life that you're distracted. You're worried. You're upset.

So Jesus is giving us the solution, and we're going to put it this way this morning as the Big Idea. The Big Idea today is **Mary first, there will be plenty of time for Martha**. Mary first. There's going to be plenty of time for Martha. Or you could say Logos first. There will be plenty of time for diaconia. Or you could say abide first or be disciplined first or sit at the feet of Jesus first. There will be plenty of time to serve God.

So the reason that Jesus is putting this temporal priority in place is so that you don't end up giving away the Jesus you don't have enough of for yourself. Let's just say you're like half full. You've spent enough time with Jesus, so you're half full of Jesus. You're feeling pretty good. You're not out of the picture. Then you see somebody who needs a little Jesus. You say, "I can't give them any of my Jesus. I don't even have enough for myself. I'm not going to give any of my Jesus away to that person."

So you do. You have people who are believers who they are walking around and say, "Forget him. I got to protect my Jesus because..." So Jesus is saying that the relationship is greater than the task, not that the task is unimportant, but that just in order for you to be able to do the task, you need to give first priority to the relationship. You need to Mary first. There will be plenty of time for Martha. But Mary first. Fill up in your relationship with Jesus until you fill all the way up and start to overflow so that you have enough Jesus for yourself and then plenty Jesus leftover, you see, extra Jesus to give away to other people. That's the deal.

### **HOW DOES THAT HAPPEN?**

So how does that happen? How does that happen?

I decided to tell you about the story about Mary and Martha because it's the story, but there are some didactics in the scriptures that go along with this. So there are a number of related passages. John 8:31 and 32.

"If you remain in me," and that's the same word as abide. "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, then you're really my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." So some of you might just want to take... I put this up here so those of you who wanted to who are seeing this visually, at least, can take a picture of it, or you could write it down too of course.

Then John chapter 15, verses four to 11. I did a little print out of the New American Standard Bible version of this because it uses the word abide, and it just is so beautiful in the New American standard. Verse four, 10 times the word abide is used in John 15, verses four through 11. These are the words of Jesus.

"Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vein, so neither can you unless you abide in me." It's a beautiful word picture, isn't it? So you're a branch. So if you're cut off from the vein, then what's going to happen? You're going to wither. You're going to be walking around, "Woo is me. Woo is me. I wish I knew how to get back to Jesus." And you're not going to be of much use to yourself or others.

Verse five, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me and I am in, he bears much fruit." So what is one of the things that we all want to do? We would all love to bear much fruit. You're here

today... I mean, there are lots of men that didn't get up in O dark 30 to come here. You're here. You want to be bear much fruit, that's why you're here. Jesus is giving us the secret to do that. It's Mary first. They'll be plenty of time for Martha. He says it right here.

"He who abides in me and I in him, he bears much fruit. For apart from me, you can do nothing." Meaning nothing of any real significance.

Verse six, "If anyone does not abide in me..." We'll skip that one. He's thrown away.

Verse seven. I mean, that's not you guys. Verse seven, "If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you." Oh my gosh, Mary first. Mary first, and then your prayers get answered. So you bear much fruit when you abide, your prayers are answered when you abide.

Verse eight, "My father's glorified by this that you bear much fruit." So prove to be my, what? My disciples. So every disciple wants to bear much fruit and the starting point here is to abide.

Verse nine, "Just as the father's love me, I've also loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love." Wow. Who doesn't want to experience God's love? "Just as I have kept my father's commandments and abide in his love, these things I have spoken to you so that my joy maybe with you and that your joy maybe made full." I mean, wow. I'm walking around here. I'm distracted. I'm worried. I'm upset about different things now. Why don't I feel any joy? I mean, why don't I feel any joy? I don't understand why I don't feel any joy. Will somebody please tell me why I don't feel any joy? You don't feel any joy because you're not abiding in Christ. You're not putting Mary first. You're putting other things first.

Big Idea here today is Mary first. There's going to be plenty of time for Martha.

Now we could also look at Matthew 6:25 to 34. I don't think we got time to do that. Well, let me take a look. Maybe we do. No, we don't have time to look at it specifically, but this is the text. It says, "Do not worry about what you eat, wear, drink. Your father knows that you need these things." Guess what, this is the same word for worry in Matthew six that is used to describe Martha in Luke chapter 10. "You're worried," Jesus said. The words of Jesus, "You're worried and you're upset about many things. But only one thing is needed. So don't worry. Seek first his kingdom. This is another way of saying it. Seek first his kingdom and all these things will be added to you."

All right. You can look at that later. Again, the Big Idea, Mary first. They'll be plenty of time for Martha.

### **HOW CAN YOU MARY FIRST?**

Then the final thing is how can you Mary first? How can you do that?

Brothers, in love, I say this. You have all the time you need to do everything God wants you to do. If you believe it, then you... You're not going to live it if you don't believe it. You can know it, but you have to believe it. The record of scripture is that you have all the time you need to do everything God wants you to do. So the starting point is how the Mary first is to believe that you don't have to be running 110 miles an hour. You don't have to be so wrapped up in your all consuming job that you just don't feel like you have enough time to do any Mary. I can't do any Mary. You don't know what I have to go through. You don't know me. You don't know what kind of responsibilities I have. I'm a big deal in my own mind.

So anyway, yeah. So the starting point is just understanding that you have all the time that you need to do everything God wants you to do. And then the second thing we say here from time to time, a Bible, a small group in serving someone else will solve 90% of your problems. So the idea of being in the word for yourself, I did this at a very young age. I was watching kids go to bed. I'd watch a couple hours of TV, and after a couple of hours of watching these things bounce around on the TV... You know what I'm talking about? You know the things that I'm talking about that bounce around on the TV? You know the things I'm talking about? You know what I'm talking about? I was having all kinds of thoughts I didn't

want to have, but I'm too busy to spend time with God. But I got plenty of time to watch a couple of hours of TV.

About the time I went to that same Windy Gap conference that I mentioned at the top of the message here, I made a decision that I would go to bed two hours earlier and start getting up two hours earlier. Then just spend that time with God. So I've been doing that my entire adult life, and I think it's made a difference, frankly. I think it's made a difference. Am I perfect? Far from it, but I think it's made a lot of difference because I just made that decision that I was going to put spending time with God in his word. I was going to make that into a priority.

So maybe get up 10 minutes earlier, whatever it is. Or however you want to do it, but you have to decide that if you give this time to do Mary, that God will return to you as much time as you need to do everything else he wants you to do. If you believe that, then that opens the door to do that. All the normal tactics apply about building habits and things like that.

So you have a small group here, but here's what I've... I was just thinking about this. In every small group that I've been in, and I've been in quite a few, a lot of them are just one on ones. So a small group of two. But there's always been at least one other man that I saw as a Paul. So how can you do Mary first? Find yourself a Paul. Find yourself somebody that you can look up to and watch because a lot of discipleship is getting the information. But a lot of what Mary was getting was not just information, it was what she was learning by being around the presence of Jesus. The example of his life. I know this is true. I saw this with Bill Bright, the founder of Cru. Wow. What a big guy.

I had the privilege of being mentored by Bill Bright for 10 years. But you know what I remember? I remember one day that we were on a... It's called Mission Volga, V-O-L-G on the Volga River. We were on going down the Volga River in some kind of river boat and then doing evangelistic meetings right after the wall came down and Russia opened up. I remember that one of Bill Bright's key lieutenants went and knocked on his cabin door, and he came to the door. He asked Bill, he said, "Do you have any extra dental floss with you?" Bill said, "Sure," and he went and he got his little container of dental floss and came back to the door and pulled off a strand of dental floss, tore it off and handed it to this man that he worked with. I cannot begin to tell you the number of ways that has changed my life.

So another way to Mary first is to find yourself a Paul, probably in your small group, but maybe somewhere else. So that you can Mary first. That's the Big Idea again. Mary first. There will be plenty of time for Martha. All right. Let's pray.

Our dearest father, thank you for this opportunity to look another one of your son's core teachings. Something that provides clarity to us about the priority between task and relationship. Lord, I just pray that you would help each of us to sort out how we want to put our relationship with you ahead of the tasks that you've given us to do. Fill us all to the overflow in our relationship with you so that we have enough of you for ourselves and then plenty of leftover to do the other thing that will help solve our problems, that's to serve someone else. We ask this in Jesus name, amen.