

# Questions People Ask in the Bible

## A Distracted Life – Luke 10:40

It is reported that there are nearly 3,300 questions listed in the Bible.

Over the past 3 months I preached on 5 questions that God asked and then proceeded to examine 5 key questions that Jesus asked. This morning we're beginning to look at 6 important questions that individuals asked in the Bible.

This morning's question takes us down an important path in considering the role of distractions in our lives. We all deal with them constantly.

**A distraction:** *a thing that prevents someone from giving their full attention to something else*

Distractions can be both dangerous as well as helpful.

### Dangerous:

- Approximately **9 people are killed** and more than **1,000 injured daily** in the U.S. in incidents reported as involving a distracted driver.
- The **National Highway Traffic Administration** reports that during daylight hours across America, approximately **660,000 drivers** are using cell phones or electronic devices while driving.
- And I'm sure we've all experienced or been the perpetrator of someone using their electronic device while **trying to carry on a conversation with someone else**. While we claim to be more connected than ever, because of our electronic devices, in actuality we carry on far less meaningful conversations than we ever did in the past.
- I experienced the results of distracted driving several years ago. It was Connie and my anniversary and one of Connie's real enjoyments in life was driving her **Pontiac Sunfire convertible car** around. So, I decided to take it over to a car care center for them to wash and clean it up real nice. I was so proud as I drove it out of that detailing center anticipating Connie's look of excitement and joy when she saw her shiny car. I was waiting at the stop light when suddenly, to my shock and dismay, I saw the backup lights go on on the large SUV in front of me and within seconds slam into my shiny new car. I was in shock and as the driver of the SUV and myself got out of the car and all I could say was **"look what you did to my wife's anniversary present"**. After repeating that phrase several times the man in the SUV apologized and said that he didn't know what he was thinking, except for the fact that he was distracted because he was headed back to the hospital to visit his father who had recently had a heart attack.
- On a far less traumatic side, if you've ever watched a basketball game, as the opposing player is attempting to shoot a free throw you'll often see the home fans waving their arms or whatever else they can find to wave in an attempt to distract that player from making the free throw.

### Helpful:

- I remember a meeting at the **police department** when several of the SLP officers were receiving a reward and us chaplains were invited to attend as well as the officers family. Part way through the presentation a wife of one of the officers was trying keep her small baby quiet in her arms but she was having none of it. The baby was over her shoulder and hence facing me. I began to just waves my hands around making various shapes and contortions. The baby immediately stopped crying and fussing and was glued to what my hands were doing for the remainder of the presentation. What was I doing? I was distracting the baby from whatever was causing her discomfort and redirecting her attention to my hands.

**In the Bible** we have many examples of people being distracted from what they should have been doing.

- **Esau** was distracted by his extreme hunger and ended up selling his birthright to his brother for a pot of lentils.
- **King David** was distracted from serving as king when he saw Bathsheba taking a bath on the rooftop. This distraction resulted in acts of lying, adultery, murder and the death of their child.

- **Jonah** was distracted from going to Nineveh and telling them to repent because of his hatred for the Ninevites, resulting in the whole being swallowed by a large fish episode.
- **Peter was doing well walking on the water** until he was distracted by the wind and the waves, resulting in him beginning to sink

And there are many many more that I'm sure you could think of as well.

This morning I want to focus our attention and hopefully learn from an event in Jesus' ministry involving Jesus, two sisters and a distraction. The account is only 5 verses long, so please listen or follow along on the screen as I read it this morning.

### Read **Luke 10:38-42**

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named **Martha** opened her home to him. She had a sister called **Mary**, who **sat at the Lord's feet** listening to what he said. 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!"* *"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."*

Let me say, right up front, that I'm aware that some of you think Martha gets a bum rap as a result of this story. After all, someone had to serve as the host and Mary was shirking her responsibility. And I'll address that objection later in the sermon.

Notice the phrase it uses to describe Mary's actions. She was *"sitting at the Lord's feet listening to what he said."* Now this may very well simply refer to the physical action of what Mary was doing that day while her sister, Martha, was in the kitchen busy preparing lunch for Jesus and all the people following him around. But it might very well be more than that. For that phrase, *"sitting at the Lord's feet"* was a Jewish idiom which was frequently used to describe someone who was a follower or a disciple of a teacher.

Paul used this same phrase to discuss his student to rabbi relationship with the rabbi Gamaliel (**Acts 22:3 KJV**)

*"I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today."*

So, to sit at the feet of a teacher or rabbi meant that you were committed to following them. Bible teacher, **Ray Vanderlaan**, in a series of video teachings entitle, **"In the Dust of the Rabbi"** in which he talks about how at the time of Jesus, disciples of rabbis wanted to hang out with their rabbis as much as they physically could because they wanted to observe everything the rabbi did, so that they could live just like they did. They wanted to be so close that literally, the dust of the rabbi would cover them. So, we see Mary, in our passage this morning, wanting to soak in all that Jesus had to say and follow Him as closely as possible. She had an incredible commitment to Jesus. And we see that in other exchanges Jesus has with Mary.

- After their brother, Lazarus, had passed away, Jesus encountered Martha and Martha says that if Jesus had been here earlier, their brother wouldn't have died. Jesus tells Martha that he'd like to see Mary and when Mary hears this news she leaves the house at once and upon finding Jesus, she falls down at his feet. Seeing her reaction caused Jesus to weep.
- About a week after Jesus raised Lazarus from the tomb, Martha hosts a party for Jesus. And it says that at that party, "Martha served" but Mary took some very expensive perfume and anointed Jesus' feet with it and wiped his feet with her hair. A woman letting her hair down in public was a big no-no, but Mary didn't care. Her devotion to Jesus was incredible.

So, we see that Mary, consistently had a deep love for and commitment to Jesus that apparently became the focus and desire of her life.

Martha, on the other hand, seems to be much more the practical servant – which many of you can identify with. And there’s absolutely nothing wrong with being a servant type of person. That’s not what Jesus is critical of Mary for. Notice in our text this morning what Jesus is critical of Martha for. First, Martha is critical of both her sister, Mary, and of Jesus.

*“Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”*

In Martha’s estimation, she’s getting the raw end of the deal here. Perhaps, Martha would love to sit at Jesus’ feet and listen to him teach as well, but somebody’s got to make lunch. It’s what a proper host does. And in her estimation, Jesus ought to be at least a little irritated that Mary isn’t helping out.

Martha is wrestling with a sense of entitlement and perhaps you have as well. Perhaps you also feel like God should have worked within your life differently than He has. That when you look at your life, it’s not the way you’d have worked it out if you were God, and so you find yourself a bit disappointed with God or irritated or angry at God. And God and Jesus understand. Life, this side of heaven, doesn’t always end up the way we’d want it to if we were in charge. But God doesn’t get angry at you for your disappointment, and Jesus doesn’t get mad at Martha for her irritation with Jesus.

Neither does Jesus tell Martha that her preparing the meal was wrong or sinful. But what’s happened is that Martha has allowed her busyness in preparing the meal, and her sister’s lack of help to steal her attention away from Jesus and it took her joy away from having Jesus in her presence. Let me read again, Jesus reaction to Martha objections.

*“Martha, Martha you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”*

I love how Jesus says, *“few things are needed – well actually only one thing is needed.”* From this exchange, what would you say is the one thing that is needed?

**The one thing that is needed, is focusing your heart and mind on Jesus.**

Would it have been possible for Martha to have done this while preparing the meal? Yes it was. But she let her sense of entitlement to Mary helping her get in the way of her enjoying Jesus’ presence in her house.

**Brother Lawrence** was irritated for many years that he was stuck in kitchen preparing meals day after day in the monastery. In his mind it was such a degrading and menial job. It was only after many years of living with this irritation that he began to discover that he could be peeling potatoes and still experience the joyful presence of God’s presence, right there in the kitchen. Later he wrote a powerful little book entitled, **“The Practice of the Presence of God”** detailing how recognizing and living in the very presence of God day after day transformed his life from one of frustration to one of absolute joy and delight.

The apostle Paul had plenty of reason to complain to the Lord on how he was so badly treated during his ministry. But instead, we see him and Peter singing at midnight in the disgusting jail in Philippi there were thrown into. (**Acts 16:25**).

And then later, Paul finds himself under house arrest in Rome and he writes a letter back to the church in Philippi and says, *“Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.”* (**Philippians 4:4**)

Jesus told Martha that only 1 thing was really needed in life. In this same letter to the church at Philippi, Paul writes about that *“one thing”*.

**Philippians 3:7-14 (NIV)** *But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. 10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the*

*power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.*

*12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. **But one thing I do:** Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

Paul was passionate for knowing Christ as deeply as he possibly can and not just in his mind but in his heart as well. His passionate desire, which drove him every single day, was to chase after Jesus. In that regard he was very similar to Mary, but rather than sitting and meditating on Jesus, he was busy fulfilling Christ's calling on his life to preach the gospel message to the Gentiles. But while living out this calling on his life, it kept driving him more and more back to Christ. Preaching the Gospel everywhere wasn't a distraction, but rather it kept driving him deeper in his relationship with Christ.

In our fast paced society we live in, very few of us can afford to sit around all day long focusing on Jesus. So how do we pattern our life in such a way that we become more like Paul and Mary rather than being distracted like Mary was?

The great Christian author, **Dallas Willard**, once wrote that **the greatest enemy to our spiritual lives is distraction**. I believe that one of Satan's most effective weapons and drawing us away from God is by using distraction.

This distraction might show up as **busyness**, or **heartache** (unfulfilled hopes and dreams) which can lead to **bitterness**. Or it might be **unforgiveness** (to where we focus on how badly we've been hurt) It doesn't have to be outright sin – Satan can be much more subtle than that. He doesn't necessarily have to get us to completely turn our backs on God, he just merely needs to get us to be distracted by other things or activities which turn us slightly away from God. And the end result will be nearly the same. A slight variation over a long period of time will increasingly draw us further and further away from God. (illustrate this by slightly walking away from someone and the effects of that over extended steps and time)

### **Steps to avoid distraction:**

#### **1. Recognize the Lord's presence with you throughout every day.**

Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV) *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. **And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.***

#### **2. Intentionally focus & refocus your mind and heart on God and Jesus daily.**

Colossians 3:1-4 (NIV) *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

#### **3. Live a life of gratitude**

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV) *Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for **this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.***

#### **4. Recognize distractions and redirect your heart and mind back to God.**

Proverbs 4:25-27 (NIV) *Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. 26 Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. 27 Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.*

**Sermon Outline:  
The Danger of A Distracted Life  
Luke 10:38-42**

What most often distracts you in your relationship with God?

What does it mean to “*sit at the feet of Jesus*”?

What was Martha’s real distraction?

**Steps to Avoid Distraction:**

1. Recognize the Lord’s presence with you throughout \_\_\_\_\_
2. Intentionally focus your \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_ on Jesus every day.
3. Live a life of \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_ distractions and \_\_\_\_\_ your heart and mind back to God

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