

Feet First

by Warren Wiersbe

Spending time with the Lord gives us enrichment, enablement, and prepares us for ministry, allowing us to become a blessing to others.

Duration: 34:31

Scripture: Luke 10:38-42, John 11:1, John 12:3

Topics: "Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of spending time with the Lord Jesus Christ. He uses the example of Mary, who chose to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to his teachings, while her sister Martha was busy with household chores. The speaker highlights that Mary's decision to prioritize her spiritual growth and relationship with Jesus had a lasting impact on her life and those around her. He encourages the audience, especially students, to not be discouraged by the distractions of the world but to prioritize spending time with the Lord and studying His word.

Transcript

Luke chapter 10 verses 38 through 42. It's the familiar story of Mary and Martha and the Lord Jesus in Bethany. Luke chapter 10 verse 38.

Now it came to pass as they went that he, Jesus, entered into a certain village and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving and came to him and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me.

And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her. And may we learn from Mary how to choose that good part that shall never be taken away from us. People often go together.

If I mention the name Northfield, for example, you automatically think of D.L. Moody. Or if I mention Philadelphia, I suppose most would think of Benjamin Franklin, Hannibal Missouri, Mark Twain. Of course, this is true in the Bible.

If I mention the name Beth-El, you think of Jacob and the ladder that he saw coming from heaven down to earth. Or if I mention Jericho, you think of either Joshua or Zacchaeus. But no one can be confused when you mention Bethany, because all we know about Bethany is in connection with Mary and Martha and Lazarus.

Mary is found three times in the New Testament. In Luke chapter 10, John chapter 11, and John chapter 12. And the interesting thing is this, every time you find Mary, she is in the same place, sitting at the feet of Jesus.

We have an old Swedish hymn we used to sing years ago, sitting at the feet of Jesus. Oh, what words I hear him say. And Mary was often at the feet of Jesus.

It's the place of submission. It's the place of satisfaction. It was the place where she learned his word.

It was the place where she shared her love. I want to suggest to you today that this is the place that you and I need to be every day. You see, Mary is a picture to us of what we call the devotional life.

Now, at this point, someone says, Pastor, I hope you aren't going to talk about the morning devotional time, because I've tried it and it doesn't work. I am going to talk about the morning devotional time. And I have tried it and it does work.

Now, there are problems and there are battles. But Mary pictures to us what you and I need to be doing every single day, coming apart to sit at the feet of Jesus, to love him, to learn from him, and to be blessed by him that we might be a blessing to others. Now, I suppose I have to argue about this, and so I will talk to you about reasons.

I want to storm the citadel of your will today to convince you of the importance of spending time every day with the Lord. I'm not talking about a dull routine. I'm not talking about reading your way through a devotional book.

I'm talking about spending time with the Lord Jesus in a satisfying relationship day by day. Now, may I suggest to you that there are three reasons why you and I need to meet the Lord every single day. First of all, because of what it means to us personally.

Let's start there. I'm not being selfish. If I say to you, you ought to meet with the Lord every single day and spend time in prayer and fellowship and in the word, because it does you good.

I'm not being selfish. When my doctor says to me, I won't be here next week, Dr. So-and-so will take care of my cases, I'm going off to a special training seminar, I need to develop some new skills. I don't say, doctor, you're selfish.

That's a mean thing to do, because a professional man needs to keep his skills up to date. He is doing himself good that he might do me good. This is true of a musician, it's true of a teacher, it's true of a mother or a father.

If we don't take care of ourselves, we can't do much for anybody else. Paul writes to Timothy and says, take heed to thyself and to the teaching. Now, we'd put the teaching first.

Paul didn't. He said, you take care of yourself, you make sure you are growing, and then you can share something with somebody else. And so I say to you, the first reason for this devotional time with the Lord

is because of what it means to you.

Now, I don't know about your experience, but in my experience, there have been two tremendous blessings that come from my devotional time. The first is what I like to call enrichment. Here's Martha fussing over here, defrosting TV dinners and getting everything ready.

Here's Mary over here, and she's waiting before the Lord and listening to His voice. And you wonder, what in the world is Mary doing? And Jesus tells us what Mary is doing. Jesus says, she hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.

Have you ever stopped to think of how much in a day's experience does not last? So many things that we come in contact with in the course of a day do not last. The food that we eat gives us strength for that time, but it doesn't last. The experiences that we have, we enjoy for the time, but they really don't last.

And yet, what we do with the Lord Jesus, what happens between my heart and His heart lasts. You see, this is enrichment. You can watch television and get entertainment.

When you come to the Lord Jesus Christ, you get enrichment. There was passed into Mary's heart and mind and life eternal truth and eternal love and eternal glory, and this could not be taken away from her. This is what the Christian life is all about, my friend.

This business of meeting with the Lord day by day is an experience of enrichment, and you can tell the people who are enriched. Peter said to a beggar one day, silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I unto thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk.

Such as I have, give I. You can't give something you don't have yourself. And here's a worried and bothered mother who's trying to give her children some kind of guidance. Ah, but she needs guidance.

Here's a student out on his PCW assignment trying to give somebody spiritual help. Yes, but he needs spiritual help. Here's a teacher trying to instruct his class, but he needs to be taught.

And this is an experience of enrichment. When you meet with the Lord in His word through prayer and worship, you garner to your soul treasures that can't be stolen from you. You see, Mary loved the word of God.

Mary would have said with Job, I esteem the words of thy mouth more than my necessary food. Martha was fussing about food. Mary was feeding her soul.

She would have agreed with Jeremiah who said, thy words were found and I did eat them. And they are the joy and the rejoicing of my heart. She would have agreed with her Lord who said, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

It's an experience of enrichment. Secondly, it's an experience of enablement. I have found that by spending time every day with the Lord, starting my day with Him, that it gives me the enablement I need for that whole day.

After all, you and I can't operate on our own human power. It's impossible for you and me to do spiritual work with carnal ways and carnal power. The spirit indeed is willing, said Jesus, but the flesh is weak.

And when Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and listened to His word, she was given that divine enablement that she needed. Here's someone last week, Tuesday, three o'clock in the afternoon, he cracked up, went to pieces. A crisis came and that crisis found him unprepared and he went to pieces.

Ah, but he didn't go to pieces at three o'clock on Tuesday afternoon. He went to pieces long before that. Some point in his life, at some point in his life, he began to neglect prayer and the word of God, got too busy and deterioration set in.

You've heard that stupid statement, a crisis makes a man. That's a lie. A crisis never did make a man.

A crisis shows what a man's made of. The tree gets its roots down deep and pulls up the nourishment and the tree grows day by day by day. And then the storm comes.

The storm doesn't make the tree grow. The storm proves how deep the roots have gone. Mary faced some crises in her life.

Not long after this, you find Lazarus gets sick and Mary prays and says, Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick. And God doesn't answer her prayer. Some Christians fall to pieces when God delays to answer prayer.

My friend, if we can't face the delays of life, how in the world are we going to face the demands and the disciplines of life? Then Lazarus dies. The old serpent comes to Mary and says, oh, you prayed, you love him. You talk to him.

Why didn't he do something? Lazarus dies. Lazarus is buried. And then Jesus shows up and Mary comes out.

And you know where Mary is at Jesus' feet. You see, when you're at Jesus' feet privately, when things are going well, you'll have no problem coming to Jesus' feet publicly when things are kind of tough. And she went through that crisis without any problem whatsoever.

She said, Lord, I know that you are the Son of God and I know that you can do all things. A little later on, she found out that Jesus was going to die and she loved him and she cared for him. And so what does she do? She brings that alabaster box of ointment and she anoints him, John chapter 12, and prepares him for his burial.

How do you face the disappointments of life? How do you face the delays of life? How do you and I face those demands of life when there's difficulty and trouble? We face them the way we face the Lord Jesus. If we're spending time at his feet, it gives us divine enrichment. We don't have cheap lives that are made up of tinsel and bubble gum.

We have lives that have some value to them. There is enrichment and there is enablement. That's the first reason why we need that daily time with the Lord because of what it means to us.

There's a second reason. We need this daily time with the Lord because of what it means to others. Now, you can't separate your walk with Christ and your life with other people.

Now, you may think you can, but you can't. I can't. The Christian life is a cross.

There is a vertical relationship between me and the Lord and there's a horizontal relationship between me and other people. And I have noticed this, that when the Lord and I are getting along with each other, it's

much easier for me to get along with other people. If you read the life of Mary, you find that her life is something like this.

Did you ever go into a quiet pool and you drop a stone in the water? And then you watch these rings, these ripples work their way out until actually you drop a stone out in Lake Michigan someplace. Actually, whether you can tell it or not, that ripple just keeps going out and keeps touching. Mary's life is like this.

The smallest circle is a picture of Mary at the feet of Jesus. And some efficiency expert says, I can't think of anything more wasteful. Here's a woman who could be in the kitchen.

She could be helping her sister. What is she doing? She's at the feet of Jesus. Wasteful.

May I defend Mary for just a moment? Mary is not a picture of devotional life and Martha a picture of duty. I've heard people say, some people like Mary, they're contemplative, they're meditative. And some people are like Martha, they're busy, they're active.

And you're either a Mary or a Martha. Jesus didn't say that. Jesus said, be a Mary, don't be a Martha.

You see, Mary did her work. Did you notice there are two evidences here that Mary did her work? The little word also. Mary also sat at Jesus' feet.

She did her work, but she also sat at Jesus' feet. And Martha came and said, Lord, she left me to sit down at your feet. She had done her work.

She did her share of the work, but she realized that you can't work all the time. You've got to spend some time with the Lord. Now the ripples of blessing get wider.

First, Mary is a blessing in her own home to her sister. My friend, if you and I can't minister to each other at home, we won't do much good outside. Mothers and dads need to be a blessing to their children, children to their parents, husbands and wives to each other.

Those who are closest to you, that's the first circle. That's the Luke chapter 10. Then in John chapter 11, you find an amazing thing.

Mary's a blessing to her friends. And then in John chapter 12, you find Mary's a blessing to the whole world. There's a growing expansion here of blessing, and it all starts with being at the feet of Jesus.

Let's take this first circle. If you and I are spending time with the Lord, then it's going to mean something to other people starting at home. What was wrong with Martha? Was it wrong to work? No.

Was it wrong to prepare a meal for Jesus? Of course not. I thank God for people who know how to cook because I can't. What was wrong with Martha? Jesus tells us what was wrong.

He didn't say, Martha, Martha, you shouldn't cook a meal. Martha, Martha, you shouldn't work. He didn't say that.

He said, Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things. Anxious. You're pulled apart.

Martha, your problem is not that you're working. Your problem is that your work is pulling you apart. If you would spend time at my feet getting the enrichment and the enablement that you need, it wouldn't pull you apart.

And he said, Martha, not only are you anxious, but you're troubled. That word troubled means distracted. So here's a woman who was divided and distracted.

You'd have a hard time living with a person like that. You see, Martha's problem was not that she had too many jobs. Martha's problem was that she had too many masters.

She was trying to run her life. She was worried about what Mary thought, this, that. Oh no, you can only have one master.

Mary had one master. Mary chose that good part that couldn't be taken from her. She got her orders from the Lord.

The next time you and I find ourselves distracted and divided, we're being pulled apart, we throw up our hands and say, I've got so much to do. We better stop and say, wait a minute, my priorities must be wrong. Now, friends, I can't conceive of a person serving Jesus Christ and being hard to live with.

There's something wrong. There is no division in the Bible between duty and devotion. If my devotional life doesn't lead to duty, there's something wrong with my devotions.

And if my duty does not help to strengthen my devotional life, there's something wrong with my duty. Spending time alone with the Lord prepares me for ministry, and ministering prepares me for spending time with the Lord. These two don't compete with each other.

They work together. And my friend, if you say you're serving the Lord as a student, as a teacher, whatever you may be doing, and you're hard to get along with, something's wrong. The problem was not Mary, the problem was Martha.

And when there walks into a fellowship somebody who has calmness and peace, he's not worried and frustrated and pulled apart. It shows up the spiritual sicknesses of other people. Mary's devotion showed Martha's lack of dedication.

Martha's problem was her priorities were all fouled up. Now you can always tell, you can always tell when your priorities are fouled up. Number one, you get critical.

You find a Christian running around trying to serve God and he's critical. There's something wrong. I'm not talking about honest criticism.

There's always room for honest, helpful criticism, evaluation. I'm talking about Martha's kind of criticism. First, she blames God.

Lord, don't you care? Oh, when you start saying that, watch out. Lord, don't you care? Don't you care that I am left alone? Sounds like Elijah. I only am left.

They're not sure about me anymore. She accused the Lord Jesus of not caring. She accused Mary of not caring.

Watch out when you look at some other Christian and say, I'm working harder than he is. I'm sacrificing more than he is. How do you know? She was the most important one.

My work, my life. And Jesus said, Martha, you better learn from Mary. If you're really busy, spend time at my feet.

That will give you the calm and the enrichment and the power that you need. Now, you know, Martha did learn her lesson here in Luke chapter 10. Martha was there and Mary was there.

I assume Lazarus was there, although he's not mentioned. And Jesus was there. The disciples probably were not there.

Here are four people. And Martha is having apoplexy, getting dinner ready for four people. When you turn to John chapter 12, you find Martha and Mary and Lazarus and Jesus and 12 disciples, 16 people.

And Martha is serving. And there's not one word of complaint somewhere between Luke 10 and John 12. She learned a lesson.

I think she learned it in chapter 11, when Mary came out and got at Jesus' feet. And Martha said, you know, that's where I ought to be. Martha learned that the problem is not the job on the outside.

The problem is the heart on the inside. And so Mary was a blessing to her own home. Now, if you want to be a blessing to your fellow family members, to your fellow students, to your fellow employees, the people who are closest to you, spend time with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Somebody at this point is saying, but pastor, you're being very mystical. Don't you believe in winning souls? Are you only going to talk about sitting at the feet of Jesus and being enriched and being blessed and being a blessing to other Christians? What about the lost? Well, if you turn to John chapter 11, you'll find out that Mary was a soul winner because when Jesus came and raised Lazarus from the dead and a wonderful thing happened. In John chapter 11, verse 45, then many of the Jews who came to Mary and had seen the things which Jesus did believed on him.

It doesn't say Martha's friends got saved. It says Mary's friends got saved. The most important thing in evangelism is spending time with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me say a word of warning to our students. Many of our freshmen are here today and we thank God that you come to Moody church and worship with us. At some point in your studies, the devil's going to say to you, why are you sitting here reading theology? Chicago's full of unsaved people.

Why are you spending time studying your Bible? There's a world that needs to be reached and you'll slam your book shut and you'll go to the Dean and say, I think God's called me to leave. We meet with this year after year. May I say to you that one of the finest things you can do to win people to Christ is just to spend time with the Lord.

Mary was a soul winner. The circle of her home was blessed because of her. The circle of her friendship was blessed because of her.

She won people to Christ because she spent time with the Lord Jesus. The circle gets wider though. When you get to John chapter 12, that beautiful story of Mary breaking the bottle and anointing our Lord's feet.

It says the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment. Mark tells us something rather interesting about this story in Mark chapter 14 and verse nine. You remember the disciple said, why this waste? This

ointment could have been sold for a year's wages and given to the poor.

Let me pause to make this remark to you. Now listen closely. If you start living at the feet of Jesus, expect to be criticized.

Just expect it. Expect to be misunderstood. Mary lived at the feet of Jesus.

Her sister misunderstood her. In John chapter 11, some of the people misunderstood her. When she went up to go out to meet Jesus, the people said, Oh, she's going to the tomb and she's going to work.

She's going to worship there. She's going to mourn there. She wasn't.

She was going out to meet Jesus. Even the disciples criticized her. Jesus defended her.

Jesus said, she's done a beautiful thing for me. And Mark 14, nine says this, this that she has done shall be told throughout the whole world. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine doing something in your own home that has a blessing to the ends of the earth? There are people in this congregation right now who daily spend time with the Lord and there may be criticized for it, misunderstood because of it.

But I want you to know that they are reaching out and touching the ends of the earth. There are missionaries supported by Moody church whose lives are being blessed because we have people here like Mary who spend time at the feet of Jesus. And so the first reason we ought to do it is because of what it means to us, enrichment, enablement.

The second reason is because of what it means to others, to those who live with us, that small circle, to our unsaved friends who need us and out to the vast reaches of the world. Never does a person have more power, more potential, more value than when he's at the feet of Jesus. There's a third reason, not only because of what it means to you and because of what it means to others, but we need to spend time each day with the Lord because of what it means to Christ.

You see, the Lord Jesus Christ deserves our love and he desires our love and he delights in our love. You say, but I want to give him my service. First, give him your love.

But I want to give him my gifts. Fine. First, give him your love.

What would you think of a child who was always receiving father's gifts but had no time for father's love? What would you think of a wife who was grateful for the paycheck but not grateful for the husband? Oh, how easy it is for us to get just like Martha. Martha opened the door and received him into her home and then she neglected him. How about that? She said, Lord, come on in.

You did that once. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him.

I will sup with him and he with me. And you said, Lord, come on in. And he came in and he saved you.

And from then on, you've neglected him. Martha got real busy doing things for him, but he doesn't want us to do things for him. He wants us to do things with him.

I know you've heard the story about the little girl who determined to make a Christmas present for her father and he come home from work and say, honey, where are you? And she wouldn't be available. And

she just give him a quick kiss at night, vanish into her room. Then Christmas came and she came out with this wonderful gift she'd made for him.

And he said, well, honey, I really appreciate the gift, but I would much rather that you had spent the time with me. See, one day the gift falls apart, but that love that enriches us stays forever. And so we ought to spend time each day with the Lord because of what it means to him.

It meant something to Jesus when Mary came and sat at his feet and listened to him and loved him and worshiped him. There's an interesting paragraph in one of those little books in the Old Testament that we avoid. It's the Song of Solomon.

In the Song of Solomon, in chapter five, we read this. Let me read it to you. The bride is speaking and she says, I sleep, but my heart waketh.

It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled, for my head is filled with dew and my locks with the drops of the night. You see, here is the bridegroom coming to the bride. Here is the lover coming to his beloved at the door.

Now she answers him, I've put off my coat. How shall I put it on? I've washed my feet. How shall I defile them? We always have excuses why we can't spend time with the Lord.

See what happens. My beloved put his hand to the latch of the door and my heart was moved for him. She saw his hand.

She saw his nail pierced hand as he reached through to open the door. I rose up to open to my beloved and my hands dripped with myrrh and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock. I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone.

All she got was the leftovers of the blessing. She didn't get the blesser. Why was he gone? Because love is a very sensitive thing.

Because love says, I have come now, not later, now. And we make excuses. You know what happens? We go looking for him.

We don't find him. That's what happened here. My soul failed when he spoke.

I sought him, but I could not find him. I called him, but he gave me no answer. Have you ever had that experience? You're looking for Jesus to help you, but he's not there.

You call upon him. He doesn't answer. You know why? When he called upon you, you didn't answer.

When he wanted you, you weren't there. And if for no other reason you and I ought to spend time every day with our Lord because of what it means to him, doesn't he deserve our love because of who he is and what he's done for us? Are the trinkets and toys of life so important we have no time for him? The most important part of your life is the part that only God sees, that private time when you're alone with the Lord. Now, if you have been neglecting that time, get back to it.

If you've been skimping on it, get back to where it ought to be because of what it means to you. You'll never have the enrichment and the enablement for life without it. Because of what it means to others, our families need it.

Our unsaved friends need it. God can work through us to be a blessing to them and because of what it means to the Lord. I wonder how many of us have been satisfied with getting a handful of fragrance.

Mary wasn't satisfied with a handful of fragrance. I read in John chapter 12 that the fragrance filled the house and that fragrance has been spilling out of that house and filling the whole world ever since she did that. Don't be satisfied with just a handful of fragrance.

The Lord wants to spend time with you sitting at the feet of Jesus. Let's be like Mary. She found at his feet her blessing.

And she brought to his feet her burden. And she gave at his feet her best. And because of this, God gave his best to her.

Our Father, our hearts condemn us. Forgive us. Forgive us for violating that beautiful love.

Forgive us for having priorities that have been twisted. Forgive us, O God, for substituting activity for ministry and doing for being. I pray for any of your children who have not been meeting with their Savior.

Lord, may this be a new beginning for them. For some who have gotten careless, may this be a time of fresh beginning. For those here who don't know Jesus as their Savior and who need to come to his feet for salvation, help them to come.

Oh, to think, Father, that we're going to have all eternity to fellowship with the Son of God. And yet, we can begin that fellowship now. Make this very meaningful and real to us now, we pray, in Jesus' name, Amen.

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