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INTRODUCTION:
WE NEED TO STOP AND LISTEN

“One thing is necessary...” (Luke 10:42)

I can identify with Martha.

How about you?

Take a minute to read the short account of Martha and her sister from Luke 10:38-42.

Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.

And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.”

But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.”

Now look back over what you have read. What words stand out to you?

I can tell you what the Holy Spirit highlighted in that passage for me:

“But Martha was distracted with much serving.”

Ouch.

It's so easy to be distracted by all the things we need to do! We're busy! Our days are filled with serving! There's so much to be done, especially if you have little ones in the house! Everyone needs you! Like Martha, we can become distracted by "much serving".

My dad, as he grew less active, enjoyed watching the busy activity in our household. Almost any time he came to visit he would inevitably say, "Ah, a woman's work is never done." (He would know. He grew up in a family of eleven children – seven of them boys.)

He was right. There's always something else to do. We're never "done".

So if we wait until we're done or even until we think we have time to read and study God's Word, we probably won't ever get around to it.

What did Jesus say to Martha when she started complaining about her sister not helping her?

"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but **one** thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

What had Mary chosen? What was she doing when Martha, in her anxious exasperation, told Jesus He should make Mary help her? (Ever feel that way when you're rushing around in the kitchen? "Why is everyone else sitting around talking while I'm in here trying to get this meal on the table? Can't they see I need help?")

Where was Mary? She was sitting at Jesus' feet, listening to his teaching. And Jesus was happy with that – even if it meant He had to wait a little longer for dinner.

Because Mary loved Jesus, she was listening to Him. She was eager to hear what He had to say. If He had said, "You know, Mary, you should probably go out in the kitchen and give your sister a hand," she would probably have jumped right up and helped.

I'm sure Martha loved Jesus, too. That's probably why she was putting

Introduction: We Need to Stop and Listen

so much effort into the meal she was about to serve Him. And Jesus must have appreciated her hospitality and her eagerness to meet His needs. But He responded to her complaint with a gentle, “Martha, Martha”.

“You are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.”

Only one thing is necessary.

Our labor, our plans, our lists, and our moment-by-moment sacrifices for those God has placed in our lives—they’re all good. But we need to make sure we choose the good portion, the portion that will not be taken away from us. We need to slow down long enough to listen to Jesus. When we do, all the rest of our activity and busy-ness will start to make more sense. We’ll understand why we are doing what we’re doing, and we’ll be equipped to do it all with a heart that pleases God.

I would like to help you as you choose that good portion! This little book is designed to help you sit down at Jesus’ feet and listen! You may not get to sit down very long, or you might not sit down at all. But for five minutes a day – maybe in one-minute snatches if that’s what it takes – for thirty days, we’re going to look at just one chapter of the Bible. Each day we will look for something different in Psalm 37.

We’re going to become very familiar with this psalm. At the end of thirty days, we will have spent at least 2-1/2 hours studying Psalm 37! Those little bits of time add up to a lot! You’ll be amazed at what the Holy Spirit can teach you as you take the time – even just five to ten minutes a day – to dig into the Word! Your life will be changed!



GETTING STARTED

Before we start our study, we're going to take some time to make a "battle plan". We need to strategize. How will you make this happen? How will you really make time to dig into God's Word?

Let's take a few minutes to do the following:

- Gather materials
- Think about when and where you will study.
- Make plans for keeping children happy and occupied during your study time.
- Pray for God's blessing on your time in His Word.

1. Gather the supplies listed below and put them all in one place.

- Bible, in your preferred translation
- Paper
- Pen
- Colored pencils
- Access to the Internet, although it is possible to complete these studies without a computer

(See Appendix A for more details and suggestions.)

2. Think about *where* you want to (or *can*) do your study.

- Is the *bathroom* the one place where you get a few minutes of peace and quiet? Put everything in a basket in there.
- How about in the *kitchen*? Can you squeeze in just a little reading while stirring a pot or waiting for the microwave?
- In *bed* at the end of the day (if you can stay awake)?
- In the chair *where you nurse the baby*?
- In the *car* out in the driveway, while someone else watches the kids?

The goal is to think about the place you are most likely to have **5 minutes to read** (not necessarily all at the same time). *If everything is there waiting for you, it will be much easier to actually do your study.* You won't have to spend precious time just looking for your pens, Bible, and notebook. Be strategic. Keep a basket of playthings for the children nearby, if you'll be doing this while they're awake.

3. Think about *when* you want to do your study.

This may not be realistic at this stage of your life, but if you can designate a time, you'll be more likely to do the study. Remember, you will only need five to ten minutes a day. If you want to spend more time, you can, but *five minutes a day is more Bible study than **no** minutes a day!* Take what you can get!

- Can you get up just *five minutes earlier* each day? God can give you the energy to function without those extra five minutes, and, as Paul says in Philippians 4:13, we can "do all things through Him who strengthens [us]". Pray for *Christ's* strength!
- How about making a commitment to study your Bible *before* you check your Facebook account, email, or other online distractions?
- Can you talk your *husband* or an *older child* into watching the kids for five minutes sometime each day, or could you do your study

Getting Started

right *after the children are in bed* (before anyone thinks about needing a drink or going potty)?

- Or can you catch five quiet minutes during the *baby's during-the-night or early-morning feeding*?
- Could you start a *quiet time* in the afternoon with all the children on their beds with books or quiet activities? Before you start housework or any other tasks during this time, grab your Bible and do your study!
- Or how about a short "*blanket time*" each morning, with little ones playing quietly on their own individual blankets while you study for a few minutes? This takes some training, but can buy you several minutes of quiet (while also teaching your children some self-control).
- **One of my favorite approaches when our children were little** was to have everyone else pull out their Bible storybooks and have *their own "Bible time"* while I had mine.
- Or better yet, *invite your older children to join you!* Read aloud for them, and let them watch you highlight words, or if you're brave, let them do the marking for you!
- How about putting digital clocks in the children's rooms? Post a card with "7:00" written on it on a wall near the clock. Explain to your children that when the clock says the same thing the card says, they can get up. Until then, except for trips to the bathroom, they should stay in their beds. Then make sure you start studying by at least 6:45!
- If you are the mother of very young children, take the time to read **Appendix B**. It will give you hope and some creative ideas for getting into the Word, even during this exhausting stage of your life.
- **If you can't do it any other way**, try to grab your five minutes in *smaller snatches*, and put your study materials in the place you're most likely to accomplish that. Do whatever it takes!

4. Pray.

Don't forget to start each study time by **praying and asking the Holy Spirit to teach you**. We can't do this without His help!

Let's start our study by **praying** for God's blessing and **thanking** Him for His loving grace that delights in giving us the desires of our hearts. Ask Him to help you come up with at least *five minutes a day* to read His Word, and ask Him to give you the desire and commitment to study His Word, no matter how challenging it is. He'll do it!

My prayer is that you will be encouraged as you see that it *is* possible to be a mother and still get the nourishment you so desperately need from God's Word.



DAY 1:

THEME

We're ready to start on our journey through Psalm 37! Today we're going to get a broad picture of the entire psalm.

Assignment: Start by praying for the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study. Then **read all of Psalm 37**. Think about what you know of David's life. What sort of evildoers did David deal with in his lifetime? Can you think of some times when he would have been tempted to be a little peeved with the wicked people in his life?

When you have finished, **read the Psalm a second time**. This time watch for repeated words and ideas. You don't need to mark or record any of these yet, but pay attention to the main themes or topics of the psalm.

When you have finished, assign a title to the psalm, based on its main themes. Record this in your notebook.

Tomorrow we'll start marking repeated phrases. Have your pens and/or colored pencils ready!

For your children:

You should be able to have your children join right in on this assignment. You may want to read the chapter just one time with them. (If you read it once by yourself before reading with your children, you can

Day 1: Theme

look for repeated words and emphasize those a bit as you read aloud.)

Before you start reading to the children, ask them to listen carefully for **repeated words and ideas**. When you've finished reading, discuss what they noticed. Talk about how the psalms are songs. What title would they give this song?