

“One Thing”



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Christ Is Life Ministries

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Introduction

Thank you for choosing to read this booklet because what I will be sharing has made a profound impact on my life. In fact, what you will be reading is a reflection of where I am on my spiritual journey today. This booklet we will be focused on two events both involving Mary, the sister of Martha. What the Lord has revealed to me about these passages has been very rich. I must admit I have read these passages several times over the last 50 years but now they are resonating in my heart like no other time before. I knew the Lord was calling me to these two passages to glean something that I had missed before.

As I began reading and meditating on these verses my wife put a book in my hand called *Adoration* by Martha Kilpatrick. I had read it a number of years ago but this time was different. The Holy Spirit used this book to open my eyes to reveal the “one thing” in ways I had never seen before. I share this because I will be using quotes from her booklet.

I pray what the Spirit has put on my heart to share with you will encourage you and stimulate you in deeper ways to seek the “one thing.”

The One Thing – Luke 10:38-42

*“Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord’s feet, listening to His word. 40 But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.” 41 But the Lord answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; 42 but only **one thing** is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” Luke 10:38-42*

As we get into this passage, I want to start by distinguishing the differences between Martha and Mary.

MARTHA

*“But Martha was **distracted** with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, “**Lord, do You not care** that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then **tell her to help me.**” Luke 10:40*

We see Martha in the kitchen preparing a meal for her Lord. We can’t fault Martha for that because she was serving the Lord. However, the problem was not what Martha was doing, but it was the attitude of her heart while she was doing it. Her heart is revealed initially by the word “*distracted*.” As a result of her distraction, she came up to the Lord and said, “*Lord, do You not care?*” She was totally focused on herself and the importance of what she was doing over what Mary was not doing to help her. As a result, she was frustrated. His response to her fleshly frustration was this:

*“Martha, Martha, you are **worried and bothered** about so many things”*

Make no doubt about it. Martha was being scolded by her Lord. Why? Because the all her preparations (“so many things”) were a greater priority than the “one thing.”

Do we not have a Martha living inside all of us? Isn't there a part of us that wants to justify Martha because she was doing a good and noble work by serving her Lord. Aren't we supposed to do good works? Doesn't God's word make that clear? Yes, it does. The question is, “What is our heart /motivation in doing those works?” Is it out of a need to do something for God to earn something from Him? Are we doing these works out of obligation?

I must admit that for 30 years as a Christian the answer to these two questions was “yes.” Why? Because I was taught and eventually believed God needed me to do certain things for Him which I did secretly hoping I would earn His love, acceptance and favor. The problem was not the works I accomplished. It was the heart with which I was doing them.

Martha did her work to earn approval from the Lord. When he rebuffed her, her heart is exposed when she goes into self-pity by saying, “*Lord, do you not care?*” This is how we know Martha's heart was not right. She was doing something **for** God expecting something **from** Him. Martha's problem was not a “works” problem. It was a heart problem.

Would you stop for a moment and examine your heart? Perhaps as a result of reading through this section, the Spirit wants to reveal something about your heart. Stop for a moment and listen to see if the Spirit has a word for you about this.

MARY

*“She had a sister called **Mary**, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word.” Luke 10:39*

Then there is Mary. What a contrast. She didn't think it was necessary to be in the kitchen with Martha. She didn't even give it a thought. Why? Because the "One thing" was in her presence. In His presence, she lost all other sense of reality than the divine reality sitting in front of her. I can see her gazing at His face, His hands and His feet in total fascination, wonder and awe.

What did she see that we need to see? What was she experiencing that we need to experience? I pray the Holy Spirit will reveal the answers to these questions as we go through this booklet.

The "ONE Thing"

*"only **one thing** is necessary"*

When Jesus says "*only one thing is necessary*" what is He referring to? What is the one thing that makes everything else irrelevant and pale in comparison? The "one thing" is simply focusing our hearts on Jesus. Mary gave up all other things for the "one thing." Her highest and greatest priority was her heart for Jesus which is on full display in this passage.

Nothing or no one was going to hinder her from her focus, her attention and her heart being totally fixed on Jesus. There was no other option for her in that moment but to be in the presence of her Lord. He was the object of her divine fascination. It was not only "necessary," it was her necessity because nothing else would satisfy. Everything she wanted and needed was totally fulfilled in His presence and His presence, she was totally satisfied.

For Mary, the "one thing" was more than a geographical position of being at His feet. It was that Mary's only desire was to knit her heart to His. She not only craved intimacy but she desired something greater. Oneness of heart with her Lord. Why?

Here is Martha Kilpatrick's answer to that question from her book *Adoration*:

“Her barren soul recognized He was her Existence. Her hungry heart believed He was her Sustenance. Her questing mind knew He was her Reality.”

When you think of the “one thing” for Mary is that what you are experiencing? If not, is the Holy Spirit beckoning you to Jesus’s feet to experience the “one thing?”

In addition to Mary, Paul and David discovered and experienced the “one thing” as well. Let’s take a moment and look at how they described it.

Paul’s One Thing

We see the “one thing” for Paul in Philippians 3:8. This passage is from the Amplified Version

*“But more than that, I count **everything as loss** compared to **the priceless privilege and supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord** [and of growing more deeply and thoroughly acquainted with Him—a joy unequaled]. For His sake I have lost everything, and I consider it all garbage, so that **I may gain Christ.**”*

Think about Paul’s words. Let’s start with the word everything. I looked up the Greek word for everything and the meaning was “everything. “ What does it mean to count “*everything as loss*”? Anything and everything that draws you away from seeking, knowing and loving Jesus. Think about these words, “*priceless privilege, supreme advantage.*” Even though these words are not in the original text, is it not a priceless privilege and supreme advantage to intimately know Jesus?

The word “*knowing*” is the Greek word “epignosis” which is not just a general knowledge of something or someone, it is knowing someone at the deepest and most intimate level.

When Paul said, “*so that I may gain Christ*,” what did he mean? Did he not already have the fullness of Christ in Him (Colossians 2:9, 10)? Interesting that one of the New Testament definitions of the word “gain” is to gain Christ’s favor and fellowship. Don’t we all seek Christ’s favor and fellowship?

However, gaining Christ to Paul has an even deeper personal meaning. It means to experience a relationship that flows out of a deep desire for intimacy with Jesus. We need to understand this key truth about God’s love and intimacy with Him. While the love of God towards us will always be unconditional, intimacy with Him is always conditional. We see this in Proverbs 8:17 and James 4:8

“I love those who love me; And those who diligently seek me will find me.” Proverbs 8:17

*“Come near to God and He will come near to you...”
James 4:8*

These verses convince me that intimacy is not just a one-way relationship. To experience the “one thing” means to seek the heart of Jesus in the same way He is seeking ours.

Let me end this section with some very encouraging words from Paul in 1 Corinthians 8:3.

*“But if anyone **loves God** [with awe-filled reverence, obedience and gratitude], he is **known by Him** [as His very own and is greatly loved].” (Amplified Version)*

David's One Thing

"One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD and to meditate in His temple." Psalm 27:4

One of the definitions of "behold" in the Old Testament is "to see with a state of overwhelming emotion." Can't you feel the emotion in David's heart when he said these words? Beholding God's beauty was David's one thing. To behold the beauty of the Lord is to search the depths of His heart, to bask in His glory and to understand and receive the height and depth of His love.

What I most love about this passage is that it is coming from David. David, the man's man, the rugged warrior, and the conqueror of many battles. However, there was another side of David. A tender and passionate side. Like Mary, he did not hold back. He gave his whole heart to the One he was beholding because he was experiencing the awe, wonder and beauty of the Lord.

David gives us men the freedom to express our heart and passion for God in the same way he did. May we, as real men in Christ, move to the same place David did in order to stand with him and behold the beauty(heart) of the Lord.

Let's look at the contrast between Martha and Mary.

I Do Have Daily Responsibilities That Need To Get Done

We often look at Martha and say, "Someone had to prepare the meal. Why are we giving Martha such a hard time?" Yes, that is true. We all have things that must be done every day. Whether it is raising ours kids, going to work, or cleaning house there are things that must be accomplished every day. The result is that we can't be figuratively be at Jesus feet all the time. Or can we?

Remember the “one thing” is seeking the heart of Jesus. It is an attitude that says, no matter what I am doing, I can do it with the heart of Mary.

It is important to note that the physical position of our body is not what Jesus is after. He is after your heart. And when your heart responds to His pursuit you will find your heart desiring Him more than anything else. When He becomes the “one thing,” you will give up all distractions, idols and busy-ness to seek His presence throughout the day. It is an attitude that seeks the heart of Jesus moment by moment because “no-thing” other than Him will satisfy.

The Choice

We all have Mary and Martha living in us. These are opposite forces working non-stop in our hearts. The Martha in us is hurried, distracted and busy doing while the Mary in us is focused on Jesus. These two competing forces create the need to make a choice. God has given us the most precious gift as human beings. The gift of choice.

Isn't this what life is about? Our lives become the sum total of our choices. In fact, you are today based on the choices you made yesterday and will become tomorrow what you choose today. Here is what Martha Kilpatrick has to say about choices.

“What you choose takes you over and compels you. Your resolve is so powerful that it forms its own highway and drives you toward its arrival. Once the choice is made you do not steer. It steers you. You are owned by your decisions. You find yourself the slave of your choices and that is either bondage or joy.” Adoration

Isn't this true of Martha and Mary? Each one had to make a choice. Let's compare their choices.

- Martha chose busy-ness while Mary chose stillness.
- Martha served the humanity of Jesus while Mary chose to be fascinated by His divinity.

- Martha's heart was prideful and self-serving while Mary's heart was humble and selfless.
- Martha would feed Jesus while Mary would be fed by Him.
- Martha chose to live for Jesus while Mary chose to live from Him.

To sum it up, Martha chose duty while Mary chose Jesus.

"Mary's choice to choose Jesus was the outward result of her secret motivation, the point of her power to bow, to hear, to see and most of all to be still. Her power was from her choice. In the midst of possibilities, of different opportunities, of myriad options, Mary had chosen Him as her highest treasure..." Martha Kilpatrick

May we examine our choices carefully because as with any choice there will be consequences. With Mary and Martha, it was no different. With Martha's choice came a scolding while with Mary's choice came a blessing. The result of Martha's choice was irritation, self-pity and judgment while Mary's choice resulted in a state of divine bliss.

Today you and I will make choices that either draw us closer or further away from the "one thing." Let us pray that the choices we make today will result in us hearing the same words from our Lord that He spoke to Mary?

"(You) have chosen the good part."

Mary and The Anointing of Jesus' Feet

"Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2 So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. 3 Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume." John 12:1-3

"While He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining at the table, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; and she broke the vial and poured it over His head." Mark 14:3

I would encourage you to meditate on the front cover of this booklet and think about the significance of the jar, the perfume, Jesus's hand and feet, and Mary's posture. As I did, the Lord brought imagery to mind that I would like to share with you.

The Alabaster Jar

As I meditated on Mary bringing the alabaster jar of perfume to Jesus, the Spirit revealed to me the jar represents Mary's heart. The jar being full represents **all** of her heart. Physically, Mary gave Jesus her most prized earthly possession: an alabaster jar of perfume. Spiritually, she gave Jesus her most prized spiritual possession: her heart. She held nothing back. She gave Jesus her whole heart out of a deep-seated love and adoration for her dearest Friend.

The Perfume

As important as the jar was, it was the perfume in that jar that had the true value. This costly perfume was a year's wages. (Taking the median income of the American household today,

that jar of perfume was worth over \$31,000.) As she was breaking it and pouring it over His head, you might understand why there was a collective gasp in the room.

However, Mary didn't reason with herself or have any second thoughts. Without hesitation she emptied the entire contents of the jar. One might say, she had no choice because once you break open the bottle you must empty all the contents. However, I am convinced that even if that jar had a lid, Martha would have poured it all out because she knew the One on whose head she was pouring was of inestimable and eternal value.

The Focus

“But **some were indignantly remarking to one another**”

*Why has this perfume been wasted? “For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.” And **they were scolding her.**”*

Mark 14:4-6

Think about the scene where Mary approaches Jesus. The room was full of men who were talking and focused on each other. There was no other woman in the room. Mary, was there for the purpose of serving rather than interacting with the men. Can you imagine what happened when she started walking towards Jesus with the jar of perfume. I believe all conversation immediately stopped and all eyes were fixed on Mary.

Can you imagine how she felt in a room that just went silent knowing that every eye in the room was on her? Or how much love and focus it took for her to walk directly to Jesus? The potential for judgment was followed by the verbalized judgment by these men but it did not dissuade her. Her love and passion for Jesus, superseded herself. Her love was so intense for Him and His irresistibility so great there was no other choice but to perform this loving and sacrificial act.

Many of us might have hesitated and turned back but not Mary. Her eyes were fixed and totally focused on Jesus. She went

without hesitation and distraction. Her love for Him was so intense it blinded her to anyone else in the room but she and Jesus. Her heart was fixed on her King and nothing or no one was going to stop her from worshiping and honoring Him. Her heart dictated her actions. Her love towards Jesus says, "I stand with Jesus no matter what. You can judge me, condemn me but I am not budging." This is why the Hebrews author says these simple, yet profound words.

*"Let us **fix** our eyes on **Jesus....**"*

Hebrews 12:2

What does Mary's heart tell you about your heart? What is the Spirit revealing to you about your heart through this scene?

The Feet

*"Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister called Mary, who was **seated at the Lord's feet**, listening to His word." Luke 10:38-39*

*"Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure **nard**, and **anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet** with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume." John 12:3*

As I was meditating on these two verses, the Spirit brought these thoughts to mind about feet in general and then the meaning of the feet of Jesus. First of all, feet are the lowest part of our body yet they support our entire body and are essential to stand and walk. For me, even though Jesus is the head of the of the body (Colossians 1:18), I also see Him as my feet because without Him we cannot stand spiritually (i.e., there is no Life, no power, no walk of faith and no spiritual transformation).

At Jesus's feet is where we often find Mary. She sat at his feet for instruction. She fell at His feet in suffering. She anointed and wiped His feet in thanksgiving. Why, unlike with any other

person in the New Testament, do we find Mary at Jesus's feet? Because feet have a deep significance to Mary.

Mary was at Jesus's feet because it is a posture of humility. Being in this position, allowed her to honor Jesus by washing and anointing His feet. Think about the condition of Jesus's feet before she cleaned them and poured perfume over them. Can you imagine the dirt that had accumulated on them? Not to mention the odor coming from them. However, neither the dirt nor the odor deterred Mary.

After breaking the vase and pouring the perfume on Jesus's head, she, in humility, immediately went to His feet because it was not only being at His feet that was honoring to Him, it was from this lowly position that she was able to touch the heart of Jesus with hers.

By humbling herself in this position, she touched the Divine like few do. She saw Jesus in ways so few people ever will because it is only from humbling ourselves at His feet that we can truly see His heart. What a wonderful illustration of where our heart should be. Because at His feet our heart touches His.

As a result of her humility, Jesus gave her a place of eternal honor when He said these words:

*13 "Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, **what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her.**" Matthew 26:10, 13*

May we honor our King by humbly moving to and staying at His feet.

The Hand

When I focused on this picture on the front cover, and saw Jesus's hand reaching down to Mary, the Spirit revealed these thoughts. This hand was a hand of love, of gratitude and of honor. Throughout the New Testament, we see the hands of

Jesus touching and healing. We also see the hands of Jesus turning over the money changers' tables. I feel certain that whenever Jesus spoke, He did so with His hands.

This is why that even though we do not see in scripture where Jesus extended His hand to Mary, I believe He did. Why? As a divine affirmation to her of her heart for Him. Can you imagine how she must have felt when His hand touched her because there can be no sweeter touch than that of our Lord.

The Breaking

*"While He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining at the table, there came a woman (Mary) with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; and she **broke** the vial and poured it over His head."*

Mark 14:3

The alabaster jar that Mary brought to Jesus was sealed to keep the perfume fresh and pure. It could not be used without breaking the neck of the bottle to open it. As I mentioned earlier, all the perfume would need to be used at once because there would be no way to reseal the jar.

Before there could be pouring, there had to be a breaking. The breaking of the bottle signified Mary's full commitment to Jesus. There was no turning back. There was no putting the perfume back in the bottle. What does the breaking in this scene mean to you and me?

As I meditated on this question, two thoughts came to mind. First, Jesus's body had to be broken in order for there to be salvation and Life. This is symbolized every time we take communion.

*"And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, **He broke it** and gave it to them, saying, **"This is My body** which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." Luke 22:19*

Secondly, like Mary's jar, we must be broken in order to experience the fullness of Christ's life within us. I define brokenness as the life-long process of the Holy Spirit moving us from living from the death of our self-life to living from Christ as our Source for Life (John 14:6). In order to experience the life of Christ, we must continually be broken. We see this in 2 Corinthians 4:11.

*"For we who live are constantly being **delivered over to death (breaking)** for Jesus' sake, so that the **life of Jesus also may be manifested (poured out)** in our mortal flesh."*

Without the breaking there can be no pouring.

The Pouring

*"...she broke the vial and **poured** it over His head."
Mark 14:3*

What is the spiritual significance of pouring? The Holy Spirit gave me these four answers to that question. First, concerning Jesus there was a pouring **out** and a pouring **in**. Let's look at the pouring out in Luke 22:20.

*"And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is **poured out** for you is the new covenant in My blood."*

Through Christ's crucifixion (breaking) His blood was poured out to cover our all our past, present and future sins. Through His poured-out blood we can have eternal life by trusting in Him as our Savior.

In addition, through His breaking, His life was poured **into** us. Not only do we have eternal life at the moment we trust Jesus as our Savior, but we have the fullness of His resurrection Life poured into us. We see this in the following two passages.

*He who **has the Son has THE life...**" 1 John 5:12*

*"and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge,
that **you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.**"*

Ephesians 3:19

Concerning Mary pouring out the perfume, there are two reasons the pouring out is significant. The first reason we see in the words of Jesus in Matthew 26:12.

*"For when she (Mary) poured this perfume on My body, she
did it **to prepare Me for burial.** Matthew 26:12.*

Because Jesus had shared previously that His time was short on the earth, she honored Him by pouring out the perfume as a sign of His impending death. The men were focused on the valuable loss of the perfume. Mary was focused on honoring Jesus in His death.

Finally, even though I have shared this earlier, I believe it is worth mentioning in light of this passage. Mary pouring out of the perfume symbolizes Mary pouring out her entire heart to Jesus. She held nothing back for herself. She willingly poured it all out as an act of love and worship.

Why is this significant? Because God wants us to pour out our whole heart out and give it all to Him. However, we struggle with giving Him our whole heart. Why? For me personally, I have not given Jesus all of my heart because I don't trust Him completely. Can you identify?

It seems like we give Jesus our heart piecemeal as our trust in Him builds. If this is true for you, the good news is that you don't have to condemn yourself because the Lord understands. All He is asking is that you continue giving Him the parts of your heart you believe you can trust Him with.

Another reason we don't give God all our hearts is because we have compartmentalized our heart. Like rooms in our home, we

try to lock away in rooms in our hearts our woundedness, our false beliefs or our unbelief. Because of this we struggle with giving God our entire heart.

However, if we continue to seek God, His love will be the key to unlock all those rooms so that we will be set free to give Him our whole heart. Over time as we seek Him, He will eventually capture our entire heart because He so covets it and is so jealous for it. Because of that He will not stop until all of it is in His possession. How great a love is that?

Is there something you in your heart you are holding back? What is it the Lord wants of your heart that you have locked away? Seek the Holy Spirit to give you His answers to these questions and as He does seek Him to unlock those doors and set you free.

CONCLUSION

I pray the Spirit has used these words to give you a greater hunger and thirst for seeking the heart of our Lord. If so, let us covenant together to seek the Lord to give us the eyes and heart of Mary because she saw and experienced something that few ever will. She discovered the pearl of great price. The “one thing.”

Blessings in Christ,

Bill Loveless

Where Do I Go From Here?

At our website listed below, we encourage you to check out our four-part discipleship series called ***Growing Up – Growing Out – Growing Deep*** designed to teach Christians how to fulfill their purpose and calling. The first book in the series is called ***Growing to Become Like Christ***.

Book One covers the following topics:



- What it means to grow up spiritually to become like Christ.
- The difference between living “A” Christian life versus living “THE” Christian life.
- What it looks like practically to grow to become like Christ.
- What are some of the hindrances to spiritual growth and how we overcome them.
- How becoming like Christ transforms every area of our lives.

CILM DISCIPLESHIP MATERIALS

CILM has this series and many other studies, booklets and videos at our website listed below. To purchase ready-to-use copies from **Amazon or download for free** and do your own printing, copying and binding, please go to the **Discipleship** tab of our website. We hope you will take advantage of these materials.

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“ONE THING”

When Jesus spoke to Martha in Luke 10:42, he said there was only “one thing” that was necessary. What is the one thing Jesus was referring to? Was it just the fact that Mary was at Jesus’s feet while Martha was in the kitchen or was there more to what Jesus was saying? We will explore the answer to these questions and others in this booklet.

- * What was the “one thing” for Mary? For Paul? For David?
- * How do we experience the “one thing?”
- * What keeps us from experiencing the “one thing?”
- * How does living from the “one thing” impact our lives personally and draw us closer to God?



Bill Loveless is the founder of Christ is Life Ministries (CILM), a non-profit, non-denominational discipleship ministry. CILM's focus is teaching Christians that Christ is their only source for living the Christian life, what it looks like to be transformed into Christ-likeness, and how to be drawn into a deep relationship with Him. Bill finished his earthly journey in 2024 and is now with the Lord he loves.

For further information and to see other discipleship materials being offered, please go to our website: www.christislifeministries.com

