

“The One Thing Needful”—Acts 2:42

Determining the necessities of life may be a rather simple process for people: food, shelter, water, clothing, family, friends, health, happiness, electricity, a smart phone, internet, a computer, an iPad, money, a car, a house, a TV, a microwave, a refrigerator, golf clubs, a Sam’s Club membership, a Costco membership, a guitar . . . Well, maybe these are not all considered necessities of life in your book but think for a moment what life would be like without some of them. Truly a few are **necessities** for living while others are simply luxuries. So . . . what really is needful in life?

When it comes to God’s perspective what is needful in life takes on a whole new meaning. Jesus had some good friends named Mary and Martha. While he was visiting at their house one time Jesus spoke about the one thing needful in life in the midst of meal preparation. The importance of food in the mind of the **hostess** when entertaining company should never be underestimated. Many times it’s the first necessity considered and, while preparing for and serving company, the opinions expressed by the head of the household are not necessarily those of the management.

While Martha was making preparations Mary *sat at the Lord’s feet and*

*listened to His teaching.* (cf. Luke 10:39) Really? She sat around lazily listening to Jesus' teaching while Martha was slaving over the stove?! So Martha *went up to Jesus and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me."* (cf. Luke 10:40) Aside from her apparently rebuke and criticism of Jesus for His apparent insensitivity of her plight, certainly Jesus would recognize and validate the important service she was doing! Certainly if Jesus told Mary to help she would help, not? Yet Jesus' answer to her request in Luke 10:41-42 seems to minimize all she was doing: *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.*

Wait! Don't people need to eat? It is essential to living! And besides . . . who has a party or celebration (such as a confirmation celebration) without food? Jesus used this opportunity to teach everyone about the one thing that is absolutely necessary in life and yet gets neglected because people get distracted. That one thing needful is the very written Word of God.

How often do you open your Bible each day to hear the LORD proclaim His Word to you? How often do you search the written Scriptures when striving to act properly in your relationships and service to and for others? How often does your worship focus on the Word of God with the desire for it to dwell in

you? Colossians 3:16-17 says: *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.* How often do your expectations of life become a distraction from God's expectations for your life?

Everything in life is very fleeting, serving only the moment with it's needs, necessities and desires. However, 1 Peter 1:24-25 says: *"All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever."* And this word is the good news that was preached to you. The reason *the word of the Lord remains forever* is because of what it does:

- Through it the Holy Spirit works to convict you of your sin before God.
- It reveals Jesus, Who has dealt with your sin once and for all in His perfect sacrifice on the cross, satisfying the required punishment for your sin.
- Through this wonderful Gospel the Holy Spirit works faith in you, moving you to repent of your sins and trust in Jesus' Person & Work for your eternal salvation.
- Through the Scriptures you are actually given the forgiveness of sins in very real and concrete ways because Jesus has joined His promise of

forgiveness with Baptism, the Lord's Supper and Confession & Absolution.

- This word defines who you are in the world, how you act toward others and your purpose for living.
- It is this word which carries you through to the Last Day when, in the bodily resurrection, you will receive a new glorified body and live eternally with Jesus Who has the last word on the Last Day.

The one thing needful for life, both physical and eternal, is the abiding word of God. This word is central to worship and defines why we gather for worship. Following Peter's preaching the Gospel on the Day of Pentecost three thousand people believed in Jesus and were baptized. According to Acts 2:42, *they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching* (i.e. the Holy Spirit inspired Word of God) *and the fellowship* (i.e. gathering for worship with other believers), *to the breaking of bread* (i.e. the Lord's Supper) *and the prayers*. The Holy Spirit works through the Gospel to direct worship because it gathers us together to give and receive the forgiveness of sin through the means of grace we share.

In the midst of all life's distractions do not miss the one thing needful which will never be taken away from you: forgiveness of sins and eternal life through faith in Jesus which the Holy Spirit gives through God's written Word. Amen.