

Devotion Or Distraction

by Gbile Akanni

Gbile Akanni emphasizes the importance of choosing devotion to Christ over distractions, highlighting the biblical example of Mary and Martha to teach believers about prioritizing their spiritual life.

Duration: 47:44

Scripture: Luke 10:38-42, John 11:1-35, John 12:1-3

Topics: "Devotion", "Distraction", "Prioritizing Christ"

Description

In this sermon, Gbile Akanni explores the biblical account of Mary and Martha to challenge believers to choose devotion over distraction. He highlights the importance of prioritizing time with Jesus amidst life's responsibilities and modern-day distractions. Through practical insights and scriptural truths, Akanni encourages Christians to cultivate a deep, consistent devotional life that sustains their spiritual growth and effectiveness.

Transcript

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Telephone numbers 0703 03636 59 0703 76811 98 Email address lsmedia@livingseed.org or visit our website at www.livingseed.org Let us sit back and listen as the servant of God brings forth the Word of Life. Father, we thank you again for this day that you have given to us. We believe in you for the fact that you will touch us again in a new way.

Particularly as we know that a large part of the Christian Church today is remembering that there was a day that you ascended into heaven. And we call it the ascension day. And you made a promise again to your disciples and commanded them not to leave Jerusalem until the power for evangelism, the power for discipleship, the power to do your work.

So we pray, O God, that even from here, you will again show us yourself, reveal yourself, touch us and help us to touch you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Luke 10 38-42 I am reading from the English Standard Version. 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. Amen.

The key thing there is one thing is necessary. Or one thing is needful. One thing is needful.

And in the context of that key text we have taken, I want to speak on what I call devotion or distraction. Devotion or distraction is a question mark there. You will find out that that verse 40, the King James Version said that Martha was comforted about much serving.

But virtually all the other versions, most of them anyway, NIV says that Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. The Revised Standard Version says that Martha was distracted with much serving. And the same thing in the New English Bible and so on.

And that is why the other person was sitting at the feet of Jesus Christ and listening to his teaching. There was someone that was distracted. That's why I said devotion or distraction.

This passage is found only in Luke's Gospel. And it's very, very important. It's good that when he promised Theophilus to write an orderly account, he did not forget this very incident.

The story is not told for us to begin to compare Martha and Mary. I don't think so, actually. Not necessary to compare them in a negative way.

To criticize Martha or even to condemn her. That is not our duty. And it's not the intention of that story.

But I believe that God has put it there for us to learn very important things. It was Mary that listened. And we believe that, thank God that she did.

As a younger sister. And if we have to consider Martha a little bit. Why she did what she did.

The Bible says that she was the person who welcomed Jesus into her house. It's most likely that she was the eldest of the three. That is Martha, Lazarus, and Mary.

It was called her house. You will discover that in the dialogue that this Martha had in John chapter 11. When Lazarus died.

And she heard that Jesus was coming. When the news reached Jesus. She was coming to them at Bethany.

And then she ran out. Mary did not go out with her. It was Martha that had a discussion with Jesus Christ.

In which we got that great revelation. Where Jesus declared, I am the resurrection and the life. And then it was this Martha that went and called her sister, Mary.

And said, the master is here. And is asking for you. We are not told that Jesus asked Martha, where is Mary.

Talk less of asking Martha to go and call Mary. But she, as a sister, an older sister. Went and informed Mary.

To come out and greet the master. Well the picture I am trying to paint here is that. This is a family that had known Jesus.

It was not, I believe, the first visit of Jesus to their home. As a matter of fact, Bethany was like a home away from home for Jesus Christ. And they had been with Jesus.

I believe that three of them were actually disciples of Jesus Christ. It was a home in which the disciples felt relaxed. It was a very open home for hospitality.

I believe that they had been living in love and understanding. That is where I want to see that home. And so, Martha had been a very responsible somebody.

Very responsible. In fact, when Jesus was finally at the grave of Lazarus. And said, take away the stone.

It was again Martha who responded, not another person. No, no, no, no. They had been there for four days.

And the whole thing was smelling. And Jesus reminded her of what he had told her. You know, it is good to get this background.

And we need to remember that Mary had Jesus Christ. And about twelve other people to entertain that very day. And it was not an easy thing for her.

It was not an easy thing for her. And it is because of that sense of responsibility. That she missed out.

And didn't be where she was supposed to be at a particular time. Just understand what I'm trying to say. So, having accepted the facts of her responsibility in the home.

Because of her age, because of everything. We need to see that she did not send somebody to go and call Mary for her. She didn't send somebody.

And she did not rush to Mary. To scold her. Why are you here? Why are you here? Come out.

Which maybe some of us will do. Again, to see that this is somebody that was actually disciplined. But she took her complaint to Jesus.

That's what I love there. She went to the master and complained. We want to see some of these positive things about Martha.

Before we rush to some other conclusions. And it was because she went to the master to complain. That she got the correction that she received.

So, having given her all those considerations. We come to that correction that she received. Because that is where the Martha lies.

Look, chapter 10. When Jesus spoke to Martha, she spoke in a very tenderly tone. Otherwise, the Bible would not have wasted time by saying, Martha, Martha.

She would have said, Martha. It suggests to me, the manner of that communication. The way that correction was given.

And it's important that we take note of that, even as leaders. Because sometimes we can be very, very harsh. Even when we are given honest, good corrections.

We have to be very careful. And he said, you are anxious and troubled about many things. You are anxious and troubled.

So, it has come from the point of being combats. The point of being distracted with responsibilities. To now being anxious.

Being worried and troubled. That's a progression in her situation, in her state. Because of what she saw was important, was urgent.

That should be done first. From being distracted, taken away from where she should be. To being worried and being troubled.

That is what you find in other places. Worried and upset. She was becoming upset.

Because of one thing. Mary was not with her. And then Jesus said, one thing is needful.

One thing is necessary. It's in talking about that one thing, that Jesus commended Mary. The commendation that was given to Mary.

It is in that commendation that you discover the one thing that is needful. And he said, verse 39. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.

In James version, Mary has chosen the good part. NIV, Mary has chosen what is better. And the New English Bible says, the part that Mary has chosen is best.

What did Mary choose? To discover what Mary chose, we have to go back a little bit. To what was said in verse 39. And she had a sister called Mary.

Who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. Sitting at the feet of the Lord and listening to his teaching. They were not just telling stories.

They were not just laughing and cracking jokes. He was teaching. Very important.

And Mary was there. Mary was there. So that leads us to the real matter that we want to emphasize.

No matter how busy we may be. No matter the sense of responsibility we may have. We must put first things first.

We must know our priority. We must not see anything more important than being with Christ. And listening to his teaching.

We must avoid all distractions to our life of devotion. In fact that has been what we have been talking about right from the beginning. He said he called them and said to them.

Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men. And that making is a life long process that we have been emphasizing here. And if we leave him.

If we think that we have arrived at any point. If we don't consult with him anymore. If we don't hear him and continue to run about.

Thinking that yes, this is the way it is done. And we may not have some refreshing and revelations in what we are doing. We may discover that we have done what we think is right in our own eyes.

But not approved by God himself. That is the danger. So we need to keep close to the Lord all the time.

All the time. And this matter of distractions. This I think is something we need to talk about especially in our own time now.

Mary was to entertain about 13 people. If not more. And if at all she had some reasonable excuse.

What do you think of somebody who is distracted by what we now call cell phone, GSM or whatever. The truth is that this is controlling many people. And we continue to see.

Even in conferences, in retreats. Big time ministers. Who will always have their phone open.

At any point they will just walk out. We are busy. We are connecting.

We are not criticizing anybody. But you see I myself have a lot to identify with matter. I don't know about you.

And each time I make sure. I try at least to remind myself. That this thing should not control me.

And I know some days I need to switch off my phone for most part of that day. I just have to deliberately do this if you know. I will not be taken away.

It's a deliberate thing. I don't know it can work with anybody in any way. But the same thing with television.

Our brother was sharing not long ago the bishop. And when people make some of these true confessions you know. I think we learn.

And what I do is that. When I come for breakfast. The days I'm there for breakfast.

I take time to listen to 7 o'clock news. After that that is the end. I don't wait for 9 o'clock network in the night.

I hardly not because the news is always the same news anyway. So if you can make time and say this time yes. We need to know what is happening in the country.

And whether I have emails and whatsapp or whatever. Various means. You set out time that.

Maybe this time in the evening I check my mails. Whether they are from post office or from internet or wherever. And if we don't do these things.

That's what is called time management. Personal time management. Should always be emphasized.

In fact it's a course that people do. I'm sure many of you have done that. But it's not only doing some readings or courses on time management.

But the discipline. We have to work on certain things. Devotion or distraction.

Now think of something like meetings. Village meetings. Meetings in the cities.

Camp meetings. CCN meetings. Church meetings.

Family meetings. And then invitations here and there. And because some of these things make us to be seen.

Or fetch us some money. We are always everywhere. Especially you know.

If God is blessing you in one way or the other. Is there any limit? A friend of mine was sharing with me not long ago. How at a point he started wondering.

Looking at himself. And he took his diary. And blocked.

I think about six months. He doesn't do it every year. No.

But because of what has been happening from year to year. He decided that very year to block six months. Not taking off programs here and there.

Courses here and there. He just wanted to review certain things. With God.

That is the way he was led. We don't need to do that. But do you sometimes know that.

You need special times with God. Extended periods. Apart from what we call the normal quiet time.

Even the normal quiet time. I'm challenged. When I read some journals.

Of those who live before us. Some biographies. And discover that some people we get up four o'clock in the morning.

And we stay with the Lord for three hours, four hours. And I begin to wonder. And when you look at such ministries.

You discover that that was the secret of success. And not only in biographies and journals of people gone by. Even some people today.

We know how they started. There are some ministries that have grown. And God has given us the privilege to see.

And know a little bit. Of how they toiled. Especially in prayer.

Not just some of the difficulties and sufferings. And today you hear this name or hear that name. But you will not know that.

These people they leap out in prayer. Got a group of people. And they tarried before the Lord.

And because they have formed this as a habit. Early in life. Is very difficult to take away.

And if not that forming of the habit early enough. Many more would have been blown away. And it is never late at any time.

To begin to form a habit. You do something and do it. And stick to it.

Until it becomes a habit. But not just a routine now. You begin to enjoy it.

And that beauty behind the veil. Is what we are talking about. The devotion.

You know let me tell you. This Mary. Is not only that she was listening to the teaching.

The importance of the word of God. If we have time we are going to emphasize it again. But.

That day. That Martha went to call her. The master is here.

And looking for you. She immediately. The Bible says quickly.

Got up. And the people who were there. Because she was the person weeping.

In fact when Martha went to see Jesus. She was not weeping. That will tell you maybe.

Her age or something. But Mary came. Weeping.

And those who were comforting her. Followed her immediately. When Martha went out no person followed her.

We are not told any person followed her anyway. And they were afraid. Oh this young person.

Is she running to the grave? What is she about to do? They followed her. And then they came to Jesus. All of them were weeping.

Mary was weeping. Those who came with her were weeping. And Martha said.

Virtually the same thing. If you were here. Our brother would not have died.

Jesus did not talk to her. Because how do you begin to talk to somebody. That was already broken and weeping.

You know. She will not understand what I am saying. But.

As Jesus looked at her weeping. And looked at all those people with her weeping. The Bible said he.

Was also moved. That is where we get the shortest. Maybe.

Verse in the Bible. John 11.35. And Jesus wept. He felt.

What she felt. There was empathy. But that is not the point.

The point is that. When she came. She fell at his feet.

That is what the Bible says. Devotion. Reminding me of what Dr. Nelson said.

And so on. She fell at his feet. Means that.

It was not just a respect that she was coming. And fell. Down.
From a distance. At his feet means that she came close enough. To Jesus Christ.
There was that closeness. That the Bible said. He fell at his feet.
That speaks to us. Because some of these things are figures. Of devotion.
Devotional life. Not from a distance. And then of course.
You remember. This Mary's devotion. We can't forget what John put down.
John chapter 12. Verses 1 to 3. Six days before the Passover. Jesus.
Therefore came to Bethany. Where Lazarus was. Whom Jesus has raised from the dead.
So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served. And Lazarus.
Was one of those. Reclining with him at table. Mary therefore.
Always underlined therefore. Took a pound. Of expensive ointment.
Made from pure gnat. And anointed the feet of Jesus. And wiped his feet.
With her. With her hands. With her hair.
The house was filled. With the fragrance. Of the perfume.
It was Mary. That anointed Jesus. What Mary Magdalene.
And others could not do. They didn't have the opportunity to do. Because by the time.
They arrived with their ointment. Jesus had risen. Mary had done that.
And again was commended. By Jesus Christ. Concerning his burial.
When others were. Talking another thing. Trying to condemn.
What was done. As a waste. And so on.
Not necessary. Jesus received. That act of devotion.
And the thing there. Is not only the cost. That it was very expensive.
They say it was made. From pure gnat. And the little study.
That we do about that. Reviews that. Gnat.
Is something prepared. From the root of plants. That is found mainly in India.
It was not something. Around that area. So not a local thing.
And that is. That explains part of. His being very expensive.

It was something important. Even at that time. Mary's devotion.
Is a challenge to us. That nothing can be too much. For us.
To give up. For the master. And to give.
For the master. Nothing. Is too much.
And can never be too much. For us to give up. For the master.
Or to give. To the master. It's important.
Mary. Listen to the word of God. And then he said.
It cannot. Be taken away. From her.
Why? Is something. Of eternal dimension. It's not something.
Of just all these little. Activities and. Things that we run about.
And doing. Many of them we end here. Is something of eternal dimension.
There's no way. He can be taken away from here. I look this way.
I see. If you continue. In my word.
Then. Are you. My disciples.
Indeed. She was listening to the teaching. To be a true disciple.
We must continue. In the world. Devotion.
To the world. You know. When Jesus Christ.
Actually ascended. As many of us are remembering today. We remember it every day.
The church calendar. Is also important. To emphasize certain days.
My Bible says. In Acts chapter one. After Jesus was taken up.
And. You know. I told him.
Told him all that. He told him. Verse 14.
Of Acts chapter. One. Says.
All these with one accord. We are devoting themselves to prayer. Together with the woman.
And Mary. The mother of Jesus. And his brothers.
And even after the death of Pentecost. You see this. Issue of.
Devotion. To prayer. To fellowship.

And. The teaching. Breaking of the bread and so on.
Devotion to God. Walked out. In prayer.
In fellowship. And all the other things. But first of all.
His devotion to God. After that. John 8. Chapter one.
You go to. Chapter two. It talks about the truth.
This is the book. Of truth. The word of God is truth.
You shall know the truth. And the truth will set you free. Liberation.
From all kinds of. Bondages. I was very happy.
When the message was coming. And I think yesterday. You know.
People going to get sand. Getting ashes. This is a happening.
Even worse things. Demon. Demon.
Demon everywhere. People are trying to be popular. Or the one of.
Decreeing this or. Establishing that. And all the other things.
Instead of. Just believing the word of God. Teaching the word of God.
Proclaiming the word of God. And allow the Holy Spirit to do his work. I hear we take the glory.
We see it again and again. It's happening. There's no manipulation.
But in some of these places. People will say things thousand times. And people are being frustrated.
People who sit under that ministry. When you go in there. You see that.
They are really being frustrated. Some of them are like. In prison.
They don't know what to do again. Because the same message. Every day.
You know. From your feet. You begin to remove sins.
And all kinds of things. They are doing. You know.
The Lord will help us. In Jesus name. Devotion.
To the word of God. John. 17.
17. Talks about. The sanctifying effect.
Of the word of God. Thy word is the truth. Sanctify them with the truth.
When we. Live this devotional life. There is a way.

I think it has been mentioned here. We are being transformed. From one degree of glory.
To another. The word sanctifies. The word corrects you.
You see. You see somebody. Who stays in the word of God.
Is very difficult. For that person. Not to have.
Good conscience. Their conscience. Will be.
Will be active. Will be alive. Even when you want to.
You know. Misbehave. The spirit of God.
Will speak to you. Through the word. Will remind you of the word of God.
The devotional life. Has many many. Blessings.
The word of God. Is the sword of the spirit. And when you are saturated.
With the word of God. What other anointing. Are you talking about? Because.
Yes. Yes. We talk of anointing.
In relation to the Holy Spirit. But when you read the Bible. Very well.
You see that. The anointing is also. In relation with the word of God.
We need to grow in intimacy. With the Lord. I don't want to be more.
Of matter. Despite. The fact that.
Responsibilities. Must be carried out. I want to be more.
Of Mary. And be. Someone.
Who has received that. Which cannot be taken away. Let us mind.
That is what I mean by. Be careful. About these foxes.
The little little things. That take away. Our time.
That we should have spent. In the presence of the Lord. Some of these emergencies.
That come up. In fact it was. I think.
Even on Monday. I went out. At a point.
Because I wanted. To speak to my wife. And immediately I got a message.
That I need to come back today. Today today. Because of this.
Because of. Try to rearrange your program. This is very very important.

See how you can discuss with them. I said I'm not going to discuss anything. And I'm not going to come back.

I prayed about the issues. And I'm not leaving this place. Until Friday morning.

So that's it. You know. Things can really come.

We have to be honest about these things. Things can come. But let us be very careful.

I want to thank God for those of you. Who had made the time to come here. And it's a privilege.

And when we are here. We make the most. Use of the time.

And then we go and continue to apply. The things that God has revealed to us. The Lord uses proclamation of the word to bless us.

He uses songs as well. He uses drama. He uses visual aids.

And so on. God speaks to us in visual. In very many ways.

And that's why sometimes I like to sing. And sing and sing. There is an old song which I know all of us know.

As we pray now. He is all I need. He is all I need.

Jesus is all I need. He is all I need. He is all I need.

Jesus is all I need. Shall we start and sing that song? He is all I need. He is all I need.

Jesus is all I need. He is all I need. He is all I need.

Jesus is all I need. He is all I need. We are already praying.

Even in the words of that song. He is all I need. He is all I need.

Jesus is all I need. He is all I need. He is all I need.

Jesus is all I need. He is my everything. He is my all.

He is my everything. Both great and small. He gave His life for me.

He gave His life for me. Made everything new. Made everything new.

He is my everything. Now how about you? Some folks may ask me. Some folks may say.

Who is this Jesus? You talk about everything. He is my Savior. He made me whole.

He is my everything. Now how about you? Our last song in this worship and prayer. Is I am thine O Lord.

I have heard thy voice. And He told thy love to me. But I long to rise in the arms of faith.

And be closer drawn to thee. That stands on. I am thine O Lord.

I have heard thy voice. And He told thy love to me. But I long to rise in the arms of faith.

And be closer drawn to thee. Draw me nearer. Draw me nearer.

Oh dear Lord. Nearer blessed Lord. To the cross.

Where thou hast died. Draw me nearer. Draw me nearer.

Nearer. Nearer blessed Lord. To thy precious bleeding side.

I am thine O Lord. I am thine O Lord. I have heard thy voice.

And He told thy love to me. But I long to rise in the arms of faith. And be closer drawn to thee.

Draw me nearer. Draw me nearer. Oh my God.

Oh Jesus. Draw me nearer. Cause where thou hast died.

Draw me nearer. Draw me nearer. Oh blessed Lord.

Nearer blessed Lord. To the cross. Where thou hast died.

Oh draw me nearer. I draw me nearer, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Je rimakasaya bakuri tensa.

Rike tereboru mosobo bakiya. Je rimakasaya bakuri tensa. Just a moment of silence.

A moment of silence. What is the law saying to you about your devotional life? What are those distractions that you would deal with? Can you take a very strong stand against those distractions? Whether human or inanimate, Jesus is all I need. It may be part of what you are going to do at your free time to write down what God is saying to you.

And be courageous enough to implement them. Father, once again, we thank you for your grace. We thank you for your mercy.

We thank you that you sought us and found us. People that were no people have become the people of God. We thank you.

Oh, God, we do not take something that is precious and put down to the pigs or the dogs. It's because we are human beings. And you have, in Christ, recreated us in your own image.

That you have deposited your Holy Spirit in our lives. That we may love you. That we may serve you.

Help us to fan into flame that which have deposited in our lives. That we will not, again, be cold or even look warm. That we will really be zealous for the things of the Lord.

That our greatest desire will always be to do your will. Thank you, Father. In Jesus' name, we pray.

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