

The Distracted

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Preacher: Chris Thornton

[0 : 0 0] Good morning. Oh, that's pretty good. Good. It's an exciting day for me personally, and I'm just very grateful as well just to be part of congregation together and this family.

I'm very grateful for some friends and for people like Brett and many other people who've come today to just really be with us on this day. So I'm excited, and I'm excited about looking at this passage to you today because I think this is a very, personally, it's been a very challenging passage. So let me just pray for us before we start. And I want you to, and I say this before every sermon, God wants to speak to us, and he wants our hearts to be open to him speaking to us. So Father, I just pray that you would open our ears to hear what you want to say. Open our hearts to be willing to take on board and to walk out whatever you call us to do today. I pray that you'd use these words, but it's your spirit that would come and change our lives because we love you and we want you in Jesus' name.

Amen. I want to show you a cartoon of one of my favorite kind of cartoon series growing up, which is called The Far Side. I don't know if you can see this. I'll move out of the way. Can you all see what's going on in this? Here you have all the knights entering into the castle. They're in a dangerous situation. They're on a mission, and just as they're going into the castle, one little guy spots a goldfish. And he sees a goldfish in the water, and he's distracted by this away from what he's supposed to be doing, which is taking the castle.

Now, I think this cartoon sums up a little bit of what actually Christianity in our city, and even in my experience, can be like. We're a church. We're a people, a well-intentioned people on a mission with a direction, but sometimes in life we just get distracted by the goldfish, by the things that just catch our attention. And today we're kind of looking, and we're continuing the series that we've started looking at sinners that Jesus met, ordinary people in ordinary circumstances and situations. But when they meet with Jesus, it revolutionizes their life. Because you cannot truly meet with Jesus and have no reaction. You cannot stay the same.

Because if you truly meet with Jesus, either your heart grows colder and harder towards him, or your heart is increasingly warmed by him. But if you stay apathetic and indifferent to him, it shows you've never really met him. Because nobody who meets him goes away saying, oh, nice guy. Nobody does. And so we've looked at how the religious met Jesus and he challenged their world. We looked at how the suffering met Jesus and he gave them hope and life. And today we're looking at how the distracted meet Jesus through the story of Mary and Martha. And I think this is something we all need as a church to hear. And before I kind of get into the actual story, I want to just give us a little bit of context. Because if you've been in church for any length of time, you may have heard this story. And often this story is told in this way. You know, Martha was way too busy. She needed to cut out a load of stuff. Jesus prefers people like Mary who know how to be rather than do. Okay, so become like Mary, just kind of be. And that's kind of the way that this story is often said. And then everyone stops serving in the kids' ministry and in community groups because everyone's being and nobody's doing anything. But that's not the point of the story.

[4 : 12] Because when you read the Bible, you've always got to read what comes before and what comes afterwards in the context. And what comes before Luke positions you in this story here to show you the Christian life is both action and communing with God, both doing and being. Because what you see is in Luke 9, Jesus sends the disciples out on mission, preaching, healing the sick, doing a whole load of stuff.

They then come back and he tells them, now reflect for a minute of what you're doing. And he says, rejoice, not in all the stuff you've seen doing, but rejoice that your names are written in the book of life with heaven with me as being. And then straight after that, it's the story of the Good Samaritan, which is all the story about how God, you know, the religious people were just going on and wanting to be religious. And Jesus says, no, no, no, no, no. If you see needs around you, you've got to be out serving and you've got to be out loving them. So there's action, there's being, there's action.

And then when you come to the story of Mary and Martha, and actually afterwards Jesus talks on prayer, and Jesus says it's this whole package together. That's what the Christian life is. True spirituality, Luke is saying, is practical and it's active and reflective.

So don't go away thinking Jesus is just interested in becoming nuns or monks from the end of this. That's not the point of the story. But in a busy city like Hong Kong, this really does have a message for us.

And the story today is really about two people who are very dear to Jesus. John chapter 11 tells us Jesus loved Martha and her sister.

[5 : 46] And it's clear that this love was mutual. Both Mary and Martha loved Jesus. And you see, Martha seems to be a bit more like the older sister, you know, the responsible one.

Mary seems to be more like the younger sister. I don't know how this works in your families, but she's a kind of the little bit more carefree. But we mustn't be too harsh on Mary, on Martha in this story. Because just think about it. Martha, it says, welcomes Jesus into her home.

Okay? And it wasn't just Jesus. Okay? Jesus had a whole crowd of people with him. At least 12 disciples. And previously in the chapter, there were 72 people with him that he sent out.

And maybe if there was a few hangers on, just imagine there could be anything up to 100 people coming into their flat. Just think about that. After the service, 100 hungry, hairy, smelly, working class men coming, turning up at your flat.

What would your reaction be? Hey, great to see you. I don't think that's the thing. But Martha doesn't show any reluctance at all. She welcomes them in. She wants Jesus to be in her house.

[6 : 56] And hospitality was a way of showing acceptance. So Martha loves Jesus enough to be totally disturbed.

Which tells us, this story isn't primarily about how much you're doing or not. It's about focus and distraction. So we're going to look at two questions. Two very simple questions.

One is, are you distracted? The second one is, what's your one thing? What's your one thing? Are you distracted? What's your one thing? Okay? So have your passage with you, and we'll kind of run through it a little bit.

Are you distracted? Somewhere between the doorway and the kitchen, something in Martha changed. Martha went from loving, delighting in Jesus being with her, to then getting frustrated, stressed, and even angry at Jesus.

I mean, what happened? You see, for Martha, there was a whole load of stuff to do. Feeding this number of people, crowding into a house. She couldn't just order pizza. She couldn't food pander it in.

[8 : 02] She had a lot to do. But Jesus doesn't take issue with her to-do list. He takes issue with her priority list. Have a read of this. Verse 39.

Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. Martha was distracted by much serving. That word distracted literally means pulled away, dragged away, drawn away.

Oh, Martha wished she could be there with Jesus, but there was so much serving she had to do. There was so much to do. And she wanted to make this good for Jesus, right? Wouldn't you? If your boss came into town, you know, you want to make it good.

You're not just going to put out cucumber sandwiches. And so she's in the kitchen. I can just imagine her. You know, she's thinking, okay, we need Jesus' favorite lamb kebabs.

We need a carb. We need dessert. We need soup. And it's like dish after dish after dish. And there's 15 things that are kind of cooking all at once. And she's running around madly trying to fix stuff. And there she looks over in the corner of her eye and there's Mary just sitting in the corner doing nothing.

[9 : 14] And I can imagine her muttering under my breath, Mary, come here. Help me out. But Mary just sits there, oblivious to Martha. And so she continues running around.

And you can see the volcano beginning to boil in Martha. And she's like, I've got everything to do, everything myself. Mary's so selfish, so lazy. Doesn't she know it? So typical.

And she's running around. I can just imagine, you know, her skirt. She turns around her skirt, catches one pot, you know, sends it flying, knocks it off the scale. Vegetables on the floor. And it's like she's had enough.

She storms into Jesus' meeting. And before she knows it, she hears herself saying, Jesus, don't you care that my sister has left me alone to serve?

And pointing to Mary, she says, tell her to help me. Now, I think she was hoping at that moment that Jesus would say, hey, I'm really sorry, Martha.

[10 : 12] We should have been a little bit more thoughtful. Mary and maybe Peter. Actually, no, not Peter. You're terrible at these things. But James, go and give her a hand. You're good at cooking fish. Okay? Go and give her a hand.

But he doesn't. He doesn't. He responds with incredible tenderness. He calls her by name. He says, Martha, Martha. That's what my wife does when I'm stressed and she wants me to listen.

She says, Chris, Chris. Okay? You get the idea. You see, what Jesus is saying, he's saying, listen, I'm speaking to you out of relationship here. I'm not, I care about you.

I'm not trying to fix you. But you need to hear this. You're anxious and troubled about many things. You've got so much going on in your brain at the moment.

So many things you're trying to sort out. And you're worried. And you're stressed. Anybody relate to that? Isn't that just kind of the Hong Kong disease? Right? You've got so many plates you've got to keep spinning.

[11 : 13] And it's exhausting trying to keep them all going. Maybe it's not food for you. Maybe it's kids. Maybe it's education. It's grades. It's deadlines. It's projects. It's health issues. It's all this stuff we're trying to keep going.

And we come to the point sometimes of saying, Jesus, don't you care? And maybe we don't say that out loud. But inside, that's what we're thinking. And if I was Martha at Jesus' response, who says, you're worried about many things, and I'd say, thanks for being so insightful, Jesus.

You're sure right I'm worried about many things. And I'm trying to serve you. And if my sister would just help me out, then I'd be a little bit less stressed.

Right? But Jesus says, Mary's not the problem. Your anxiety and your focus is the problem. Jesus doesn't rebuke her for serving.

It's not the serving that's the problem. It's not the doing that's the problem. He's saying, Martha. You know, I don't think he's saying, Martha, it's okay. We were thinking of fasting today anyway.

[12 : 22] You know, don't worry about the food. It's okay. It's chilled. Jesus isn't saying that. He cares so much about Martha. Because when anxiety gets you, you know it tells you something.

It tells you you've lost your focus. It tells you you've been distracted from the most essential thing, which heals Jesus. And her priorities had gone upside down.

You see, when Martha started off, do you know what her priorities were? Okay. Jesus. Okay. And maybe his friends. And then serving them. Doing stuff. And then herself at the end.

Okay. She was willing to sacrifice herself for the sake of this. That's what the order was. But do you notice she gets distracted? And then the order shifts.

Do you notice this? It says, she says, Jesus, don't you care that my sister has left me alone? Tell her to help me. What's happened?

[13 : 23] Who's in the view most? Martha. Then it's all the stuff she's got to do. Martha, I'm alone. Poor Martha. All the stuff I've got to do.

And then Jesus, kind of somewhere at the bottom. Don't you care? And then maybe a little bit further down is actually Mary. Right? Because she's angry and annoyed at Jesus, the one she loves.

Mary, who I presume she loved as a sister. And that is so often what happens with us. Because with Martha, the distraction comes when it's both external things.

All the stuff you've got to do. And then it comes internally about the things that you desire. And when those two things meet, we can lose sight of what is essential. Martha's gaze.

She was looking at all the things she had to do. And she'd lost sight of what was essential. I don't know if you've ever seen a couple.

[14 : 27] Maybe you've been like this. A couple planning their wedding. Okay? I've seen many people do this. And they start off really wanting to make this big day. Just this amazing time.

You know, we're going to just show our love for one another. And all these kind of great romantic ideals. And somewhere between the start of that and the wedding day, there's like all this stress and all this tension.

And everyone's just fighting together. And, you know, they're fighting over like whether the groom should have more opinions on like the color of the invitation. Should it be Tiffany blue or aqua? You know, they get kind of stressed by how much money should we give to the parents-in-law.

You know, these are real decisions. But somehow they get to the wedding day and they're so exhausted they can't even enjoy it. Right? Anyone seen that? Even been there?

Yeah. And real decisions, what happens is we lose sight of the essential, which is actually the relationship. And we get wrapped up with all the little things that we've got to do.

[15 : 28] And it's amazing how sometimes people say, hey, we were actually happier when we had less stuff that we were kind of trying to get. Because that's so much of us. Oops. That's so much of us.

Everyday stuff of life, the urgent overtakes the important. The immediate overtakes the long term. And we say, this is just a special season for me.

It's a special season. But you know, what happens, I see is that special season seems to get replaced by another special season. And distraction turns into walking into another path. And that is so much what happens with our relationship with God.

You know, external things become essential. Like, this job is essential. This test is essential. Getting to this school is essential.

And often when you look back later on, you think, why? Actually, they weren't that essential. I could have got somewhere else. But at the moment, they take the whole of your gaze.

[16 : 28] Jesus says, Martha, one thing's necessary. You're worried about many things. But am I essential to you?

And maybe to watermark, he would say, you're worried about many things. Am I essential to you? Because it's not just the external that comes in and takes things that kind of distracts us.

It's also the internal. Because Martha thinks all these things are necessary because the meal was more than a meal. Right? She wants to be the perfect host.

She wants to put on a good show. Because if she doesn't, if there's not enough food, if it's cold, if it tastes bad, who does it reflect on? Her. She's going to look bad.

She's going to feel, with all the social expectations on her, she's going to be embarrassed. It's all about her reputation. Her identity has become at stake here. Her sense of worth and value.

[17 : 32] Because if she makes a mistake, if she gets it wrong, she doesn't know where it's going to lead her. And you know, the weight of that pressure crushes down on her.

It's very interesting. There's a very interesting book called The Price of Privilege. I don't know if any of you have read it. It's a book about parents and kids who've grown up incredibly privileged.

And with parents who really want the best for their children. They want to be the best parents. And so they take them to all kinds of different things. And they try and give them the best.

And what the psychologist says, she says this. Our children, to people who go to so many different activities, she says, Our children benefit more from our ability to be present than they do from being rushed off to one more activity.

Try to slow down. It's almost always in quiet, unpressured moments that kids reach inside and expose the most delicate parts of their developing selves. What she says is, many children and relationships with their parents are at this distance.

[18 : 49] And it affects the children. Because if the parenting revolves simply around endless activities, your children will miss out on your presence. And what they need more than anything is you. That's the essential.

It's you. And that doesn't just relate to parenting, the human experience of parenting. That relates to our relationship with Christ. If we just try and slot Christ into a ceaseless end of activity, and we don't ever say, I want just you.

Then what happens, we'll never end up allowing the most delicate parts of our lives to be exposed by him and healed by him and restored by him. Because he wants to bring us life and wholeness.

You see, when good desires, whether it's parenting, whether it's a good desire to be, we want things done well. We want to be a perfect partner. We want to be a perfect spouse.

We want to be a perfect student. We want to be a perfect church. And we have all these good desires. But when good desires become God desires, when wants become needs, when what was a secondary becomes primary, and if we place anything before God as our primary need, we'll miss Jesus, we'll end up getting stressed.

[20 : 10] And do you know who suffers when you're stressed? It's not just you. It's those you love who are close to you, like Mary. Right? Because stressed people, and I know this for myself, are not great at empathy.

Right? Stressed people don't give other people the benefit of the doubt. Because it's like, when a man dying of thirst comes into town, what he needs more than anything is water.

He doesn't notice the people around him because his focus is consumed by water. When we feel like we have to have all these extra things which come in our lives, and we miss the essential, it ends up affecting the people we often love the most.

And Jesus says here, It's not your to-do list. There's great. Lots of great things that you have in your heart to do.

It's not your to-do list. It's your priority list that's the issue. I don't know. There's the parable of the sower. One of the most challenging parables that I think is the parable of the sower.

[21 : 25] Do you know that parable? It's the parable of how people respond to Jesus and his word. And there's four different kinds of people. There are people who God gives his word and it just gets snatched away. There's people who kind of receive God's word and then afterwards, they don't have a root and so the difficulties of life come in and they just kind of wither.

But then there's a third category, which is people who listen to God's word, who want God's word, but then things come in and choke God's word. And that is, I think, the most frightening one of the parables because I can so see myself in that.

And he says there, you know, when you get choked by something, what happens is the life gets drained out of you and it will kill you eventually. And the spiritual life, Jesus is saying, will be choked out of you unless you realize what is truly essential and what is secondary.

If good things, good desires become ultimate desires, then you will find it ultimately crushes you, it stresses you out.

And Jesus rebukes Martha, not because he's having a go at her, because he wants her to have life and freedom. So what is essential for you?

[22 : 46] What is essential for you? And that's my second point, really. What's your one thing? Jesus says, one thing is necessary.

And I want to turn our attention to Mary, not because Mary is like this ultimately amazing kind of person, because we sometimes miss what's going on with Mary because we don't get the cultural context.

Mary's not just better because she had a quiet time with Jesus, okay? Luke is saying in the cultural context, Mary's actions were revolutionary.

They were revolutionary. They were radical. You see, Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching, okay? That statement is not simply that Mary listened to a sermon, okay?

That's not what it is. That phrase was used of an ideal disciple. Now, that may not sound strange to you until you realize women were not disciples of rabbis in those days.

[23 : 55] Only men were, okay? And culturally, women were meant to be in the house preparing the food. And one strict rabbi called Eliezer, great guy, he says, a few years after Jesus, he says, better the Lord, God's word, be burned than entrust it to a woman.

He just likes to hang around with that kind of guy. But the strange thing in this story is it isn't that Martha was rushing around trying to serve everybody.

That was culturally expected. The strange thing is that Mary broke with all the social expectations. She crossed the unwritten boundary lines to sit with all the other male disciples at Jesus' feet, and Jesus doesn't turn her away.

Because Mary, there's a cost for Mary. Because think about it. It's not that she's just lazy. You know, Martha thought she was lazy. No, this isn't about laziness. She was surrounded by a load of guys.

And knowing some of the disciples, you can imagine what they were thinking, looking at her thinking, why is she here? Like, aren't you meant to be in the kitchen? Right? That's what everyone else would have been thinking.

[25 : 05] All these eyes on thinking about what's she doing there. And yet, she doesn't notice any of them. She doesn't notice Martha just rushing around, tutting at her, shouting at her.

She doesn't notice any of that because her eyes are fixed and enthralled with Jesus. She's enthralled with Jesus. And you see, she takes the cost of everyone else's expectations, everyone else's pressures on her.

And she's oblivious to it all because she just wants to learn from Jesus. I don't know, I don't know if you think about this, but we order our lives around what we love.

You order your life around what you love. Do you know that? I mean, when you fall, and think about this, and you love what you focus on. You love what you focus on.

Okay? When you fall in love with someone, you don't just take a quick look and say, oh, I think I'm in love with them now. Right? You take a look, and then you take a second look, and you think, oh, let's take a third look.

[26 : 16] And then maybe you take a fourth look. And then after you've looked for a while at the person who is attractive to you, you kind of can't get them out of your mind. Right? And it goes with anything.

Any passion that you have, when you focus on something long enough, it begins to take your heart. And it's interesting, because when you're really busy, what you love still has priority in your life.

Fiona and I, we were dating, and we used to have completely different schedules. We lived at opposite sides of Hong Kong, and we could hardly find any time we could ever get to see each other.

Except we found 30 minutes on central MTR platform at 10 o'clock at night, and that was our date night. Because when you love someone, you get creative.

Right? About your priorities. And it's interesting, though. After you get married for a while, and those of you who are married know this, you can kind of just assume the other person's love.

[27 : 21] You kind of get used to it. Right? And then what happens is other things can become more attractive at the time. And we get distracted. My wife said to me the other day, you know, you take time to be with me in the morning, but it feels like there's this clock ticking in your head.

And soon as time's up, and you've got to get on with what you really want to do. Because she knows that I'm there, but I'm not really present here.

Right? Does anyone relate to that? Now, it's not that I don't love her. It's not those things. But other things become distractions for me. And isn't that so true in church?

We can be in church. We can be serving. We can be reading the Bible. We can be doing all kinds of things. But our heart can actually be elsewhere. We're kind of like, okay, I know I've got to be here.

But really, I want to be over there. I want to be doing these other things. Because something other than Jesus has captivated our gaze. And it's, I think if I'm real, I think there's a problem we all struggle with.

[28 : 40] And Mary, how does Mary stay focused in this moment? I don't think she was perfect. I'm sure she was distracted at plenty of other times. How could she come to this point of saying, I'm just focused on you?

Well, I think because she knew something. She knew that Jesus loved her. She knew that she was worth something in Jesus' eyes.

Martha's identity was wrapped up in trying to get valued by him and by everybody else. But Mary knew she was already loved. You see, when your gaze is looking up at the one whose expectations for you are higher than you could ever meet, ever than your expectations for yourself or anyone else's expectations for you, his are higher and he knows you can never meet them.

And yet he still loves you. It will warm your heart. You see, Jesus is the one, he's on his way to Jerusalem. He's got his eyes fixed on a goal.

And you know, Satan tries to distract him. Everyone tries to distract him. Peter comes to try to distract him. But his eyes are on his father. And his heart was set on us. He's the only one who's never been distracted.

[30 : 01] Do you get that? He's the only one who's never been distracted from what he loves. You see, our priority list is often me, the stuff I've got to do, and then maybe God down at the bottom.

His priority was his father, you and me, and himself at the bottom. Because you see, he put himself last to such an extent, it wasn't just the glares from other people like Mary had.

It wasn't just verbal abuse. It wasn't just physical abuse. It wasn't just time and money that it cost him. It cost him his own blood for you and me, his own life.

He choked to death, literally, suffocating on a cross, so that your life and mine need never be choked by things which will squeeze the life out of us.

He's the only one who could legitimately say to his father, Father, don't you care? Because his father turned his back on him, so that he would never turn his back on us. And no matter how crazy things are in your world, no matter how many things you've got to do, there's one thing you can always know.

[31 : 06] If someone dies for you, it's because they care for you passionately. Nobody has ever died for somebody if they don't care for them deeply.

And that is the fuel that will only ever motivate you to focus on Jesus. Because unless you reflect on that, and we know this if you're a Christian, but if you don't reflect on that regularly, daily, do you know what happens?

Just like in marriage, other stuff comes in and just, you don't want it to. Martha didn't want to be distracted. She had a heart that wanted God. But somewhere along the line, you just get distracted from that heart that wants Christ.

But Mary didn't come to Jesus to perform. She knew she was loved. And do you see how free she is? Do you see how free she is from everybody else's expectations?

Just think of all the expectations that you live under of what you should be, of what everyone else thinks for you to be. But here, Mary is free from them because her gaze is fixed on Jesus.

[32 : 16] She could lose all respect from everyone else. And if she had Jesus, the pressure's gone. The pressure's gone. John Wesley, he was a famous preacher.

He once said, I'm too afraid of God to be afraid of people. Here, I think the story would be, I'm too captivated by Jesus to be captivated by everything else.

And you know that sets you free from the burden of stress, from the burden of having to prove yourself, from the burden of finding your identity and the stuff which can crush you and stops you loving the people that you'd really want to love.

So let me finish with a couple of things. If you're a Christian, if you're not a Christian, the only way you can get freedom from expectations of other people, from the worries and anxieties, the many things, is if you have one thing which is greater.

And if that one thing that is greater is not burdening you with expectations, but is longing for you to come and experience love, then that, if you make Christ your center, that will set you free from whatever is capturing you at the moment.

[33 : 34] If you are a Christian, and for all of us, Jesus is very strong. The cure for distraction is repentance. And you know what?

Every day I get distracted. Every day I need to come back in repentance. Martin Luther used to say, when our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, repent, he intended that the entire life of believers should be repentant.

So just think about it. What is it that dominates your thinking? What is it? I mean, think about this. What is it that I would lose sleep over, would lose sleep over, that I would lose friends over, that I'd spend time and money and thought and planning over, and it would cost me other opportunities, and if I got that thing, all the others wouldn't matter to me?

What is the one thing that if I had this, the cost of all the other stuff wouldn't matter? Would you say, Jesus? Jesus? Could you honestly say, Jesus?

Because that is what being a Christian is about. It's about coming back and saying, I want you, Jesus, to be my essential in life. We need people around us to help us repent.

[34 : 58] That's why we have community groups. If you're not in a community group, you're going to need people who, when you're looking at the goldfish, when you're looking at the career opportunity, when you're looking at the things which are wrapping you up and getting you engaged, you're going to need someone who's just going to nudge you and say, hey, remember what's essential, and then you can worry about the other stuff.

Let me just finish with one practical thing, and I don't normally do this, but here is one thing I want us to do. Normally, I don't say we've got to do a lot of stuff because I think doing comes out of that knowing that we're loved, but here's one thing that I think distracts us in Hong Kong more than anything else, maybe.

Maybe. Anyone guess what it is? Your phone.

Some of you, right now, during the sermon, have been on your phone. Anyone feeling guilty? Right? Some of us, in the morning, we know we should be spending time with God, but actually, our phones just kind of distract us.

Anyone experience that? You know, if someone, in the first thing they do in the morning, was to get out a bottle of beer and take a swig of it, or if they came into a meeting with other people and they just had to have a swig of the beer during the meeting or during church, what would you say about them?

[36 : 39] You'd say they probably had an addiction, right? You'd say there was a serious problem, wouldn't you? But many of us, our phone is exactly like that.

Right? Because we gaze on what we love and when we're distracted, we gaze on it and do you know what? It takes us away from actually experiencing the love of God and so then we get wrapped up with the many things that we have to do.

But for some of you, repentance is going to look like this. When you come in in this morning, anytime, you're going to turn off your phone when you come into here. For some of you, if you are like Martha and you say, I want Jesus and I know this distracts me, that is what you're going to do.

Because you're going to say, I will take the cost of that because Jesus means more to me than my phone. Some of you, that will mean in the morning the first thing you do.

At the moment, it's like, you know, it's like an addiction. You've got to have it and if you don't get your phone, it's like withdrawal symptoms. Right? Anyone get that? Well, what if you replace it with actually saying, okay, I'm going to have a verse from scripture.

[37 : 54] You go to your Bible app rather than your Facebook app. Because the thing is, God is not saying, here's all the 1500 things I want you to do.

He's saying, I want your heart. And sometimes to get your heart, you need to turn away. That's what repentance means. You need to turn deliberately away from whatever distracts you and say, I'm going to turn to you.

Because Jesus wants to set you free from all the stress and the burdens and it's a daily thing. It's a daily thing. So what's the step that you need to take?

What's distracting you? What's your one thing? Because Jesus wants to set you free so you experience his love and you experience his freedom.

As a church, we need that. Let me pray. In fact, if you, before we pray, if you, see on your seat, there's a card on your seat.

[38 : 56] There's a card on your seat. I want you to look at that card. It has two things on it. It says, the first thing is, what is my one thing?

What is the one thing at the moment that is actually so big in my focus? Maybe it's one thing which is made up of many things, but one thing which actually, this is what I'm sacrificing for.

This is what I'm, I'm losing sleep over. This is what I'm, I'm actually, it's costing me things, but this is what's taking up my mind. What's my one thing? And then underneath it says, if Jesus was my one thing, I would.

What is one thing you're going to do if you actually want Jesus? If you're actually a Christian, that's the one step that you know, I need to turn from this distraction.

I need to build something into my life. And why do I want to do it? Am I going to do it because it's going to make me a perfect Christian? Or am I going to do it because I want to experience Christ's love and I want his presence.

[40 : 07] I want him. So let's just spend a minute in prayer. Maybe you just want to write on that card now. I'm going to give you two minutes to write on that card and to respond yourself to God in prayer.

and then we'll continue. Okay. Okay.

If you don't have a card, there are some cards here. If you could pass some back. Does anyone not have a card? If you could see where the hands are and you could just give a spare card that's around.

Thank you. So just come back and look at that. What's my one thing? What's my one thing?

I just want to lead you in a prayer. If you know that there are many things in your life at the moment which just wrap up your mind, just pray this in your heart with me.

[41 : 49] Father, I just... I want you. But I realize so many things come in and take my gaze.

And I've focused on so many other things. And yet I know that for love to be kindled, it needs to be regularly focused on.

I repent of the things which have distracted me. I say that I'm busy. I say it's a special time. But actually the things that I really, really, really want to do, I'll make time.

There'll be a cost. But I'll take the cost because I love those things. Lord, you want us to be present with you. And I pray, Lord, that you would help me in the midst of my craziness to stop and to say, who am I doing this for?

And thank you that you love me. That my value is not found in getting all the stuff I want to get done, done. Please free me from my worries.

[43 : 18] I lay my worries and my concerns at your feet because you are good. You are loving. And I can trust you.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.ents