

# THE ONE THING

## PART ONE – PLUGGED INTO HIS PRESENCE

### INTRODUCTION

Quite possibly, when you heard the title of this series, your wheels started turning. “What is this one thing?” you asked yourself. Well, the Scriptures clearly teach us that there is one thing that is super important and it also tells us exactly what that one thing is. But before we get into the specifics, let me share with you a couple of nuggets concerning the wisdom of simplicity and being singularly focused.

You see, it’s like the concept of a laser, which they say is just concentrated light to where it has powerful ability. That’s where we get the phrase “laser-focused” from – which is a high level of concentration on a specific task or goal. It is where one becomes hyper-focused, eliminating distractions, and has clear vision for the tasks at hand.

This is what we might call, “working smarter and not harder.” You see, I learned while working in the business world that it’s wiser to work smarter and not just harder & longer.

But most people think that they will accomplish more by working harder and spending more time on something. But the truth is – if you live by that premise, you will eventually burn out, get frustrated, and run out of gas. The key is found in working smarter. From a natural perspective, that might mean that a person figures out a completely new system that accomplishes their goals with much less time & energy.

So when it comes to the Scriptural principle of this “one thing,” we can see why the LORD gives us this. It is to show us that there is power in avoiding distractions and making the “one thing” the “main thing.” Yes, once we become laser-focused on this one thing – the main thing and the thing that is most needed – the limitations in our Christian walk are removed and we are able to become ultra-fruitful!

### THE PARABLE OF THE TWO WOODCUTTERS

Let me share with you a parable that illustrates this ...

Once upon a time, there were two woodcutters named Peter and John. They were often bantering over who chopped more wood. So one day, they decided to hold a competition to determine the winner. The rules were simple—whoever produced the most wood in a day wins.

So the next morning, both of them took up their positions in the forest and started chopping away at their fastest possible speed. This lasted for an hour before Peter suddenly stopped. When John realized that there was no chopping sound from his opponent's side, he thought: "Aha! He must be tired already!" And he continued to cut down his trees at an extreme pace.

After fifteen minutes passed, John heard his opponent chopping again. So both of them carried on chopping away. John was starting to feel weary when the chopping from Peter stopped once again. Feeling motivated and smelling victory close by, John continued chopping away, with a smile on his face.

This went on the whole day. Every hour, Peter would stop chopping for fifteen minutes while John kept on going relentlessly. So when the competition ended, John was totally exhausted but was absolutely confident that he had won the competition.

But to his astonishment, Peter had actually cut down more wood than him! How did this even happen? "How could you have chopped down more trees than me? I heard you stop working every hour for fifteen minutes!", exclaimed John.

Peter replied, "Well, it's really simple. Every time I stopped working, while you were still chopping down trees, I was sharpening my axe."

So the moral of the story is, the one that takes the time to sharpen his or her ax will be more productive than the one who exerts much effort. In other words, preparation time is not necessarily wasted time.

You see, most people think that in order to be productive, you have to work harder, faster, etc. So they just keep themselves so busy "doing" that they never take the time to discover that there might be a more efficient way to accomplish those tasks or to realize that they need time to renew themselves in order to be "sharper" for the things they have to do. But the one who takes time to stay "sharp" is the one who will be the most productive.

### **WHAT IS THE ONE THING?**

But I'm not here today to just teach you this natural wisdom. While this is certainly helpful when it comes to the things of this world, I've found that it is just as helpful with the things of God's kingdom too. Yes, while this story is usually meant to teach worldly wisdom like this, I believe there is godly wisdom contained in it as well. And that is this – the sharpening of the ax is not only accomplished by discovering a new process or self-care; our ax is sharpened as we rest in Him and learn to spend time in His presence. Yes, the one thing that the Scriptures teach us is most needful and the good part of our salvation is spending time fellowshiping with the LORD and letting His presence impact our souls. Let me explain ...

I remember hearing a quote by the author of our protestant reformation, Martin Luther, when he said, “I have so much to do today. I think I shall spend the first three hours in prayer.”

That sounds like a contradiction, doesn't it? If you have so much to do in one day, why would you spend three hours praying instead of using that time to accomplish your tasks? It's because when you spend time with the LORD, you are sharpening that spiritual ax. And when your spiritual ax is sharp, you can accomplish more in less time with the Lord present that you can with all your might & power and with all the time in the world. Amen?

So that is what we are going to start talking about this week – the one thing. The one thing that plugs us into the power source, keeping us fresh, full of life, and fulfilled in our soul.

Now this one thing is referred to in a few places. Yes, in several passages of Scripture we see the LORD giving us our purpose and where our sole focus should be. Let's look at a couple of them today ...

### THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

The first one we see is found in the 27<sup>th</sup> Psalm, and I believe it is what distinguished David, the author of this psalm, as a man after God's own heart.

In the beginning of **Psalm 27:4**, he said, *“One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek ...”* And what did David go on to say was the “one thing” that he desired and sought after? He said, *“... that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.”*

So what was David referring to when he said that his one desire was “the house of the Lord?” Did this mean he wanted to go to church every day? No, a church building was not what David sought after. In order to understand what David's one desire was, we need to first understand what the “house of the Lord” represented to the Jewish mind.

You see, during the days of the Old Testament, the house of the Lord was a type and shadow of the presence of God. In their days, the Jewish people considered the Tabernacle and the Temple as the place where God dwelt. So God's house and God's presence were synonymous terms to them. The reason for this was because it was in God's house that the Holy of holies resided and it was the place where the Ark of the Covenant dwelt – both of which were also symbolic of God's presence. So to the Jewish mind, if one wanted to be where God was, they must go to His house (which was first the Tabernacle and later became the Temple).

So when David said that his one desire was to live in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, what he was really saying was that his one desire was to dwell in God's presence all the days of his life. Therefore, it was not a building or a physical structure that David desired to dwell in. Living in God's presence was what David was hungry for!

And I personally believe this was the main thing that pleased God so much about David: that his heart's sole desire was to be with His God all the time.

## **THE HEART OF GOD**

Do you remember how God called David a man after His own heart? Many of us are familiar with this honorable description that God gave of David, but do we truly understand what it means?

In order to understand what it means to be a man or woman after God's own heart, we should first ask the question: What is God's own heart? In order to answer this question, I believe all we need to do is look at some of David's unique characteristics, since David was a man after God's own heart. In other words, if David had a heart like God's, we should be able to look at the differences between him and other people of his day in order to see what God's heart truly looks like.

So what was the difference between David's heart and the hearts of countless other believers? I believe Psalm 27:4 clearly portrays what made David different than others. Unlike countless other believers, David desired to be with God every chance he got!

You see, David valued his fellowship times with God more than others did. This is evidenced by the numerous psalms that he wrote because they prove that he spent a lot of time praising, worshipping, and loving His God. Therefore, David's psalms prove that he had tremendous times of fellowship with God, and they also prove that he had spent a good amount of time in God's presence.

So what made David a man after God's own heart was that He desired the one thing that God desires. He wanted to be in God's presence as much as possible! But you might be thinking – How can being in God's presence be God's own desire? Well, it is obviously not His own presence that God desires; so it must be someone else's presence. So whose presence do you suppose God wants to be in? You guessed it! It is our "presence" that He desires!

My friends, God desires one thing from us above anything else! He desires for us to want to be with Him! Just as David longed to be with God, fellowshiping with Him all the days of his life, God longs to be with us as well! This is God's heart: to have close fellowship and an intimate relationship with His children. His heart's desire is to spend time with us just as our heart's desire should be to spend time with Him.

So if we want to be considered a man or woman after God's own heart, we must wholeheartedly desire this one thing – to spend time in God's presence. This was David's one desire; therefore, it should be our one desire as well.

## MARTHA, MARTHA!

But David was not the only one who valued God's presence like this. In Luke chapter 10 we have an account of someone else who sought after this "one thing" too. This second reference to the one thing is found in the passage I shared from two weeks ago – Luke chapter 10 ...

We saw in this story how Jesus was invited into Martha's house. And while He was sharing God's Word, we are told that Martha was distracted with much serving while her sister, Mary, sat at Jesus' feet, listening to His teaching. Of course, we know that Martha became frustrated with her "lazy bum" sister and asked Jesus to tell Mary to come help her. Jesus responded with one of those divine "Martha, Martha's" and told her that she was troubled about many things. And that's where I want us to pick up in this story ...

Notice what Jesus told Martha in **Luke 10:42** – *"But one thing is needed, and Mary had chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."* Wow, this verse is loaded with some powerful truths that paint the picture of the mentality that so many of Christian's unfortunately possess. Let's take a closer look at it ...

First of all, notice again how Luke said that Martha was "distracted with much serving" (vs. 40). Did you know that there are many born-again, Spirit-filled believers who are exactly like Martha? They are doing many things for the Lord, but in the midst of their "much serving", they too are being "distracted" from what is the most important thing – drawing near to the Lord in fellowship.

You see, the devil understands this. So if he cannot successfully oppose us in serving the Lord, he will attempt to capitalize on our desire to do things for the Lord by getting behind us and pushing us. He will do this, attempting to both drive and distract us, because he knows that the one thing that is needed to empower us to serve the Lord more effectively and efficiently is exactly what Mary was doing – abiding in the presence of Jesus. Therefore, he will attempt to distract us from plugging into that power source until he causes what is commonly known as ministry "burn-out."

Now this certainly does not mean that what we do for the Lord is not important. What we do for Him is absolutely essential and a major part of what we are called to do; but it is not, as Jesus referred to, the "good part" of our calling & responsibility. Notice that Jesus said only "one thing" is needed and implied that it was not Martha's service for Him.

Now, again, He was not saying that her service was not important or that it did not have its place; Jesus just said that Mary had chosen the good part. The "good part" of what? The good part of His children's calling and responsibility!

You see, our calling can be broken up into two parts: There is our service and there is our sonship. And while they are both necessary; one far outweighs the other.

Just think of your own family: While you appreciate and even expect your children or your spouse to do certain things for you and for the good of your household, you by far consider their fellowship with you the most important part of the relationship, right? Sure, you do! It would be absurd for one to think that their family's service was more important than the relationship they have with one another. Likewise, it is just as absurd to think that God values our service more than He does our fellowship.

And Mary understood this one thing! Mary had chosen the good part of what God's children are called to do and she had chosen the one thing that was needful. And what was that one thing that she desired and sought after? It was fellowshiping with Jesus – drawing near to Him and sitting at His feet. Therefore, Jesus attested that spending time with Him was the good and needful part of our relationship with Him.

You see, this is a foreign concept to many believers today. Many believers would have expected Jesus to respond to Martha's request for help by saying to Mary – "You know Mary, I appreciate you wanting to spend time with Me and all, but you really need to be doing something. I mean, your sister is being more productive than you by serving Me. So you need to help her because, after all, what you do for Me is what is really important." Many would have expected Jesus to respond like that because too many Christians see their relationship with God as solely their service for Him. In other words, all Christianity is to them is what they do for Jesus. But God desires so much more from us than just our service, my brothers and sisters! He desires our fellowship!

So if spending time in fellowship with the Lord is the one thing that is needful, my question is, how can we think that we are going to be as fruitful as we can be if we do not apply this "one thing" into our everyday lives? That would be like trying to build a large superstructure without laying a good solid foundation. Therefore, we can clearly see that fellowship with God is that foundation on which a fruitful Christian walk is based.

Now this point leads me to what I would like to conclude this message with. So allow me to draw your attention back to one particular thing that Jesus said to Martha ...

### **OUR VITAL NEED**

Notice that in Luke 10:42, Jesus did not say that this one thing – the good part of our calling – is just a good idea; He said that this one thing is "needed." This is something that we desperately need to understand – that spending time with God is an absolute necessity and not just beneficial.

So let's conclude this today by skipping ahead to another verse in the 27th Psalm that explains the attitude that David had regarding his desire to be with God. What we will find is that David did not seek to be with God all of the days of His life just because of how he wanted to; we will see that David sought to be with God because he knew how much he needed to.

**Psalm 27:8** in the Amplified Bible reads this way: *“You have said, Seek My face [inquire for and require My presence as your vital need]. My heart says to You, Your face (your presence), Lord, will I seek, inquire for and require [of necessity and on the authority of Your Word].”*

Notice, first of all, that David said that God told him to seek His face and, as the Amplified Bible brings out, to require His presence as his vital need. What this tells us is that David’s desire to be with God was evidently not just initiated by David himself. No, the Lord had commanded David to seek His face and require His presence as his vital need.

The Lord has repeatedly told me the exact same thing over and over throughout my walk with Him. Yes, in my Christian walk, I have had Him tell me time and time again just how important it is that I learn to fellowship with Him. In fact, it seems like every time I have ever approached Him with a frustration that I was having in my walk, that seeking His face was the remedy He gave me. Particularly early in my walk, in the times where I asked God for answers, invariably His response to me was something like – “Son, you just need to be spending time with Me.”

But, whether we know it or not, God has told all of us how important that it is that we spend time with Him; and He has told us through Psalm 27:8. He has admonished each and every one of us through this powerful passage of Scripture to seek, inquire for, and require His presence as our vital need. None of our situations are unique. We all need to spend time with God – dwelling in His presence and feeding on His faithfulness!

You see, He knows that spending time with Him and seeking His face is vital to our spiritual life. This is why He admonishes us to do so. But the problem is not with getting God to know how much we need to spend time with Him; the problem is with getting us to realize how vital it is that we spend time with Him.

### **RECHARGING OUR BATTERY**

I believe a good illustration that describes the importance of the time we spend fellowshiping with God is in the importance of periodically plugging an electronic or battery-operated device into its power source.

You see, we all have battery-operated devices that we have to recharge periodically, and we also have some electronic devices that need to stay plugged in so that they can continue to operate. Either way, every electronic or battery-operated device has to be plugged in or recharged at some point or another.

One device that can probably be understood by most of us is our mobile phone. If we do not plug in our mobile phones regularly, we are likely to have the battery die, correct? Therefore, we place a priority on charging our phone on a daily basis so that it does not run out of power. And although having our cell phone lose its power is not a serious thing, what God wants us to understand is that a failure to maintain quality fellowship with Him is indeed detrimental to our spiritual lives. No, I am not saying that we are going to *die*

physically or spiritually if we do not spend time with God. However, what I am saying is that we will not truly live if we do not have good, quality fellowship with Him!

For example, Jesus said in John chapter 15, in order for the branch to truly live and be productive, it must abide in the Vine because apart from Him (i.e. Jesus Christ), we can do nothing. If Jesus were here on the earth during the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, He might have used the same illustration that I am using here because basically what He was making the point of is that if the branches do not stay “plugged into” the Vine, they will lose their “power” to be fruitful.

Therefore, just as is the case with our electronic and battery-operated devices, if we want to fulfill our mandate to be lights to the world, we must stay plugged into the source of that light. Why? It is because the quality of our spiritual life is directly tied to us having an abiding relationship with the True Vine.

But let me take this illustration to another level ...

What if you literally ran on a battery and, just as is the case with any battery-operated device, you had to recharge your battery at a certain time, say first thing in the morning? If this were the case, where would you be first thing every morning? Undoubtedly, every morning for a specific period of time, you would be plugged into that power source! It would not matter if you did not sleep well the night before, if you would rather watch television, or even if someone invited you to an all-expense paid trip to your favorite place to shop. No matter how you felt or what came up, you would be recharging your battery at all costs! And why? It is because you would understand how vital and necessary it is that you recharge your battery. And this is exactly how we should view our time spent with God!

Now I believe that the reason that God has indicated that we need to be this serious and rigid about our time spent with God is because if we do not adopt this mentality, the devil is sure to distract us.

Have you ever noticed that when you have decided to go to your prayer closet to spend time with God that every possible distraction will come up? Yes, invariably, the devil will send both external and internal distractions to derail our time spent in God’s presence. Some examples of these external distractions would perhaps be the phone ringing, someone knocking at the door, or the dog starts barking. But not only will these external distractions come up, even our minds will begin to be filled with distracting thoughts. For example, we might start having thoughts about all the things that need to be done around the house.

Now you know good and well that if you were simply sitting in front of the television, you would not be thinking of how you need to be cleaning out the garage, would you? So where do you suppose both these external and internal distractions come from? You guessed it! It is the enemy that plants those distractions in your path to abiding in His presence! And why do you suppose he fights our time spent with God like this? Do you think it might be because he knows how vital this time we spend with God is to our spiritual lives? I

guarantee you this is why he sends these distractions and obstacles! He apparently knows something that most believers do not!

But no more! We are no longer going to be ignorant of or deterred from our high calling in Christ Jesus! We are going to commit to spend time in the presence of our Master, and in so doing, plug into the true power source – the Lord Jesus Christ! We are going to be planted in the house of the Lord (i.e. His presence) and, thereby, flourish in the courts of our God (Psalm 92:13)!