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*Jesus, I am resting, resting
In the joy of what Thou art;
I am finding out the greatness
Of Thy loving heart.
Thou hast bid me gaze upon Thee,
And Thy beauty fills my soul,
For by Thy transforming power,
Thou hast made me whole.*



JEAN S. PIGOTT

One Thing Needful

Worshipping God is the great essential of fitness. If you have not been worshipping . . . , when you get into work you will not only be useless yourself, but a tremendous hindrance to those who are associated with you. —OSWALD CHAMBERS

In the evangelical missionary world, there is no name more revered than that of Hudson Taylor. Hudson Taylor, a remarkable man, was the father of modern faith missions. The two volumes of his life by his daughter-in-law are possibly the two greatest works on missionary activity ever written: *The Growth of a Soul* and *The Growth of a Work of God*. What was it that made Hudson Taylor the man he became and was, right to the end?

His son and daughter-in-law, who traveled constantly with him in his later years, testify that often they would be traveling over a hard cobblestone road for many hours in a springless cart. Arriving at a Chinese inn late at night, they would endeavor to obtain a little corner in a room for their father, Hudson Taylor; for usually in those inns there was just one large room where everybody slept. He was now an aged man; but, without fail, every morning just before dawn there would be the scratching of a match and the lighting of a candle, and Hudson Taylor would worship God. This was the key to his



life. It was said that even before the sun rose on China, Hudson Taylor was worshiping God.

Lessons from Taylor and Tozer

What did this great man write concerning missions? Did this master missionary, who understood indigenous principles, give us a great volume on the “how” of missions or on the “how” of planting churches? No, he did not. He gave us a very small book, a commentary on the Song of Solomon!

What was the key to Hudson Taylor’s life? He loved his Lord, and he cultivated that love. After all, it is the first commandment. Love can only be cultivated adequately in aloneness with the one you love, and this Hudson Taylor guarded.

I have had the privilege of listening to most of the men who would be considered the great preachers in the world today. One, who is now with the Lord, was A. W. Tozer. Dr. Tozer, who labored in Chicago for many years, was different, for he spoke with a freshness and with a penetration that was most rare.

When an acquaintance of mine, who was called to minister in Chicago, arrived in that city, A. W. Tozer called him and said, “This city is a devil’s den. It is a very difficult place to minister the Word of God, and you will come up against much opposition from the enemy. If you ever want to pray with me, I’m at the lakeside every morning at five-thirty. Just make your way down and we can pray together.”

Not wanting to bother the great man as he was seek-

ing the Lord, my acquaintance did not immediately accept his offer. But one day he was so troubled that he made his way very early to the lakeside, about six o'clock, only to find God's servant prostrate upon the sand, worshipping God. Needless to say he did not disturb him.

A. W. Tozer worshiped God and was one of the few men who preached consistently on the need to be a worshiper of God, telling the church in no uncertain manner that worship was the missing jewel in her crown.

Other Lessons in Worship

I came across the necessity to worship, as the man in the world would say, "by accident"; but it was by God's appointment. In the early days of my ministry in Australia it was my habit when in the city of Sydney to meet with a number of brothers in Christ for a day of prayer. We would begin about eight o'clock in the morning; and because the afternoon was usually a time of tiredness, we would pray around in our circle. When it came my turn one afternoon, I was very tired and began to quote Psalm 19:1-3:

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.

Suddenly I was quickened by the Spirit of God and began to pour out my heart in prayer. I had not prayed

like that all day. I had offered many prayers, but this was different. When I finished and the others were praying, I did a lot of thinking and waiting upon the Lord. What had I done? I had begun with these verses worshipping God from the Psalms; so the next time around I did the same thing, and the same thing happened. I was quickened by the Spirit of God, and there was that outpouring in intercession. I was borne along by the Spirit of God. I knew then that I had been introduced to a priceless key, one that would introduce me to hitherto undreamed-of heights of fellowship with my Lord.

The best time to worship is, of course, in the morning, in that time that we call a quiet time. But what is a quiet time to you? To me as a young Christian, in the early years, it was anything but a relaxed, meditative time. In fact, it was a time when I had to get through a certain study of the Word of God and certain prayers that I had to pray from my prayer list. Thus, my quiet time was not really a quiet time. It was a study time, a time for intercession, a time for petition.

Then I was introduced to a small volume on prayer by A. T. Pierson that led to an intensive study of the teaching of our Lord on prayer. If you collate all our Lord's words on prayer you will find that He taught ten lessons. At the Evangelical Institute where I teach our course on prayer, these ten lessons are the foundation of all else.

You will also discover that you cannot advance from one lesson to another until you master the preceding one. In other words, you cannot go to lesson two until you have mastered lesson one. You cannot go to lesson

three until you have mastered lesson two.

Our Lord's first lesson on prayer is found in Matthew 6:6: "When you pray, go into your room ["closet" κλυ], and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly."

He is saying, "The first thing you must do is get somewhere alone with Me," for a closet is a closed place. A room can become a closet. It means aloneness. A forest can become a closet. The important thing is aloneness, in secrecy, being alone with your Father.

"And when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." Now, what would this mean to those to whom the Lord uttered these words? To the Jew, the place that was more enclosed than any other and that would immediately come to his mind was the "Holiest of All," that innermost court of the tabernacle and the temple where the high priest met alone with God once every year. It had no door, no skylight, no window. It was completely enclosed.

The high priest went into the closet and stood before God, and it is neither intimated nor suggested that he ever spoke a word. Prayer is a thing of the heart, expressed before uttered, for God looks on the heart.

The high priest stood in the presence of God and communed with Him on the basis of a blood-sprinkled mercy seat, bringing back from that communion a message for the people. What is the first lesson to learn? It is aloneness, secrecy, communing with God on the basis of

a blood-sprinkled mercy seat.

How do we commune with God? The writer to the Hebrews tells us that we commune with Him on the basis of a mercy seat, even Jesus Christ who is our Mercy Seat. He is the Lamb of God, our new and freshly slaughtered Way.

Martin Luther said, "It seems but yesterday that Jesus died." What made this great, fearless servant of God so dynamic, so effective? He was conscious that he walked and lived in the presence of the Lamb of God who had been slain for him, for he knew what it was to come by the blood of Jesus and to meditate upon the slain Lamb of God.

We enter into the holiest, into the very presence of God, by the blood of Jesus to commune with Him on the basis of a blood-sprinkled Mercy Seat. That Mercy Seat is Christ Himself, whose blood gives us access.

What did this do for my quiet time? It absolutely revolutionized it. Instead of looking at my watch and saying, "I have ten minutes to get through my prayer list," I simply knelt down and quietly meditated upon the fact that I was in the presence of the Lamb of God and worshiped Him. My quiet time then became something for Him, not something for me; and with the worship of my heart—the pouring out of my heart to Him in worship—came the overpowering awareness of His presence.

During our years in Japan I had a friend with whom I often labored. He had a Renault, a small car manufactured in France, in which he made his way around Tokyo. In those earlier days, the Japanese were most anxious to

get you to buy their gasoline. When you pulled into any station, a whole army of attendants would descend on you. One would wipe your windshield, another would check your engine and water, yet another would check your tires, while the final attendant was busy with a little broom sweeping out your car. You just had to get out of their way.

As my friend Julius was driving along in Tokyo, he saw a little light blinking on his dashboard and knew he was short of oil. When he pulled into a gas station and got out of his car, this great army descended, washing, wiping, cleaning, everything. Then he drove out of the gas station and “blink, blink, blink.” The team had checked the water in his radiator and the air in his tires, filled his tank with gas, swept out the car, washed the windshield, *everything but that which he wanted*. Is that your experience with the Lord? Do you do everything but that which He wants you to do?

He is seeking us for what? He is seeking us that we might worship Him. That is what the Word of God says. He wants us to study, to pray for others, to give to missions, to go where He directs. But what must precede this? Let us observe Oswald Chambers’s significant word:

Worshipping God is the great essential of fitness. If you have not been worshipping . . . , when you get into work you will not only be useless yourself, but a tremendous hindrance to those who are associated with you.¹

What would you say if you were asked, “What is the one thing needful, the one thing to really concentrate on in your Christian experience above all else?”

If you are a Baptist you might say, “Soul winning”; and that is admirable. “Soul winning, witnessing, getting others into the church is the primary thing, the one thing needful. If I maintain my passion for souls in my witnessing, all else will be well.”

If you are a part of a Pentecostal group you might say, “The fullness of the Spirit, the baptism of the Spirit, is the one thing needful.”

If you are Episcopalian you might say, “The one thing needful is reverence for God.” Instead of considering the difference in emphasis in denominations, let us consider the Word of God. I believe we can prove from God’s Word that which is the most needful in the experience of every disciple of Jesus Christ.

David’s Passion

In Psalm 27 we read about David’s experience. David was a truly remarkable man, an amazing servant of God. If you are fascinated by preaching, here was a great preacher. If you are inspired by a great leader, here was the great leader of the nation of Israel. If you are interested in soldiering, here was the great soldier, the unconquerable leader of Israel in battle. If you are interested in kingly qualities, he was a great king, the greatest king ever to sit on the throne of Israel. He was an amazing man, “a man,” we are told, “after [God’s] own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14), a wonderful man of many gifts who

commanded the affection of a whole nation and led them to victory again and again. But, of course, we think of him primarily as the incomparable psalmist.

You might have asked David, “What is your ruling passion? What is that for which you live? What is it that dominates you, David? What is the mainspring of your life, the great objective of your life? Is it to be a great preacher, to convert sinners?”

He would have said, “No, not at all.”

“Well, David, your passion must be to remain undefeated on the field of battle, to lead your men again and again to victory.”

“Not really.”

“Is it to rule as a great king, to sit on the throne?”

“Oh no, not at all.”

“It’s not your ruling passion to be a great king?”

“No.”

I think he might have said, “It is rather incidental!”

“Incidental that you are a king?”

“Yes, comparatively.”

“Well, David, what is your ruling passion?”

We have his answer in Psalm 27:4: “One thing have I desired of the Lord.” David desired only one thing, that was all; but if he had this, all else would follow.

“One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I 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 inquire [or to meditate] in His temple.”

There you have it in one verse of Scripture. There is only one thing he desired; but because he desired this

one thing, all things became possible. This is the main-spring. This is what sets everything else in motion and enables all else to function as it was intended and to fulfill its appropriate role. If the one thing that is needful is desired and sought, everything else will fall into its proper place and will perform its proper function.

In a certain city in the southern United States, I recall on one occasion looking at my watch and thinking, "It's rather early." About ten minutes later I looked at my watch again. It was the same time. My watch looked the same—same hands, same case—but it was useless, for it had ceased to function as the maker intended. The main-spring had snapped. The one thing needful had ceased to function.

Keil and Delitzsch in their great commentary have this to say about David's desire:

There is only one thing that he desires, . . . an ardent longing which extends out of the past into the future, and therefore runs through his whole life. The one thing sought is unfolded . . . a lifelong dwelling in the house of Jahve, that is to say intimate spiritual intercourse . . . is the one desire of David's heart, in order that he might behold and feast upon (of a clinging, lingering, chained gaze) the pleasantness (or gracefulness) of the Lord.²

I am quoting from a commentary that is regarded by most conservative scholars as one of the finest on the Old Testament. What is being said? David's desire is an

ardent longing that runs out of the past into the future. It is not a momentary thing. Intimate, spiritual intercourse is the one consuming desire of his heart, and it was this that dominated David all his days.

Is that not surprising? David is a man's man, a great soldier, a king of kings, and what does he want to do? The one thing he wants is to behold the beauty and the pleasantness of the Lord. Everything else is relatively incidental: being a great leader, being a great king, being a great preacher, being a great psalmist. Only one thing really matters—intimate fellowship with his God. To be a true worshiper of God is his passion.

But then he says, "That will I seek after." Because this was the primary thing, he knew very well he would never be able to achieve his objective unless he really sought for it; nor will you, my friend; nor will I. At the end of the day ask yourself what you have done with your time. How much time did you set aside to worship Jesus Christ? You might be surprised.

Of course, to worship Him in your quiet time is not the end. It is only the beginning. You are merely tuning your instrument to face the day. We seem to have the strange idea that if only we can have a quiet time, everything is going to be fine for the rest of the day; and if we do not have a quiet time, everything is going to turn out miserably. This is not so. The quiet time should be set aside early in the morning, but it is only the tuning of the instrument. You cannot say, "I have had my quiet time. Now I'm fine." This is just the beginning, getting in first gear, so to speak.

We must walk in fellowship with the Lord throughout the day. C. H. Spurgeon said he was never out of vital contact with God for more than ten minutes! Little wonder that God used this great lover of Jesus Christ so mightily. Like King David before him, C. H. Spurgeon purposed in his heart to seek to be a true worshiper of his Lord, for no man will ever experience true worship in a consistent manner unless he sets his will to do so.

Paul's Passion

What was the passion of the apostle Paul? His ruling passion is plainly revealed in Philippians 3:10: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings [intimate fellowship], being conformed to His death."

Now what does "that I may know him" mean? Did Paul not know Him as Lord and Savior? Yes, but his ruling passion was to know Him ever more intimately. To know Him was the primary thing in the life of the apostle. Is "that I may know him" primary in your life?

The apostle could say in Philippians 3:8, "For [Christ] I have suffered the loss of all things . . . that I may gain Christ."

Christ was his goal. To win Christ, to know Christ, to love Christ, to have intimate fellowship with Christ, this was his ruling passion. If that is not central, then duty becomes a drudge, a chore; but when Jesus Christ is central in the life, duty is a delight.

This is a day when we have become very clever at developing techniques, a day when we are apt to be urging

people to witness; and what usually happens? They witness for a while, and then they stop. Then they are exhorted to witness again, so they go a little further, then stop again. But why do they stop? Have you ever noticed in the Pauline epistles that Paul never urges Christians to witness, nor has he anything to say about foreign missions? Nothing! How interesting! If you have to constantly be telling people to witness, something is wrong with them. If you always have to be pumping up people to get them interested in foreign missions, something is wrong with the people. What is Paul always doing? He is consistently bringing you to Christ and leaving you with Christ.

When Christ is central in the heart of the man, what does the man want to do? He wants to tell others about Jesus, and he will do so effectively. Let Jesus Christ be central in the heart of a man, and he is going to be burdened and troubled because millions have never heard of Christ. It is going to disturb him and bring him into action. What he needs is not more exhortation; he needs Christ. And the Christ within him who died for the world will speak through him to that lost world. Without true passion for Christ, nothing works consistently. It loses its power.

Jesus Christ was central in the life of the great apostle.

Mary's Choice

Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister

called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word. But [and it is a big "but"] Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." (Luke 10:38–40)

Here is Jesus' answer: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: [Now underline that. These are the words of our Lord: "one thing is needful."] and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (10:41–42 KJV).

Here we are introduced to two sisters who were both very busy. You must not think that Martha alone is busy. Mary also is busy, but concentrating on a different form of service.

When the Lord comes to the house, note carefully Martha's attitude toward Him. It is revealing. "Lord, don't You care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Don't You care? You come into the house, You see what is happening, You see I'm doing all the work, and You don't care. Mary isn't doing anything!"

So the first thing we notice about Martha is that she has a complaining spirit. In other words, she is prey to self-pity. If she complained to the Lord and rebuked Him, I wonder what she would do to others in the house?

Then she gives Him a command. Quite a girl, Martha. "Tell her to help me. Don't You care?"

What does the Lord do? He completely ignores what

she has said. He does not say to her, "Now, Martha, I know that you are very busy, and it's just too bad that Mary isn't helping you." Oh, no, He is not going to feed that monster Self in Martha, and He will not feed that monster Self in us either. But if we do not keep close to the Lord, we will fall into self-pity and a complaining spirit.

But what does He say? "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things." Underline "things," for "many things" can infiltrate into a dear woman's life and trouble her! We must take what the Lord gives us and be content. *Things* can smother you. They are smothering Martha. Be content with Him, not with things; for did not the apostle Paul say, "I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content" (Philippians 4:11)?

Live for the Lord, not for things.

Our Lord refers to Mary in verse 42 (KJV): "But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

What is the difference between Martha and Mary? You hear some people say, "Well, Martha is a choleric, the activist. She is the person who works with her hands. Mary is different. She is the melancholic: the quiet, introspective, meditative type. They are two different types. So, Martha is obviously going to be an activist, and Mary is going to be given to meditation."

Scripture does not say this. What does the Scripture say? There was a time in Mary's life when she had made a choice, and Martha had not. That is the difference. Mary had chosen, and that is always the difference between the person who is satisfied with Christ and the person who

is dissatisfied with life. One had made a choice; the other had not.

How often women come to me and say, “Mr. Carroll, you know I’m a Martha. The kitchen is my place. The home is my place, looking after my family. I’m a Martha.”

I reply, “No you are not, my friend. You have chosen to be a Martha. God wants you to be a Mary.”

You never drift into being a Mary. You can always drift into being a Martha. All you have to do is just let yourself go. No woman ever drifted into being a Mary.

“Oh, but you don’t understand, Mr. Carroll. You don’t understand my responsibilities.”

I understand them very well. I have lived in literally scores of homes in the forty years of my ministry. On one occasion, I lived in the home of a woman who had seven children and a very unsympathetic husband. She had lost two other children at birth. Though she had a large home to care for and attended to the family business in her spare time, I never saw her disturbed once. There was always the fragrance of Christ about her life, and I marveled at it.

While staying in her home during a conference, one morning about five o’clock I noticed light filtering in past the door; so I opened it very quietly and saw this woman kneeling by her piano. I quietly closed the door. The next morning the same thing happened, and the next morning the same thing again.

So, I asked her. “What time do you rise to seek the Lord?”

She replied, “Oh, that is not my decision. I made a

choice long ago that when He wanted to have fellowship with me I was available. There are times when He calls me at five; there are times when He calls at six. And on occasion, He will call about two o'clock in the morning, I think, just to test me."

Always she would get up, go to her piano stool, and worship her Lord.

I asked, "How long do you stay?"

"Oh, that is up to Him. When He tells me to go back to bed, I go back. If He doesn't want me to sleep, I simply stay up."

She was the epitome of serenity. She had made a choice, a choice that was not easy for her to make, for God had to take an idol out of her life before she made it; but when He took that idol, she was Christ's and Christ's alone.

Oh, yes, my dear sister, there is no excuse. With seven children she was busy, yes, but not troubled. That is the difference. You can be busy and not be troubled, or you cannot be busy and be very troubled. It all depends on whether Christ is central in your life.

We were created to worship Jesus Christ. We were created for Him, to become something to Him in order that He might find pleasure in us. But this demands discipline. This demands self-renunciation. This demands the mortifying of the flesh. This demands the taking out of our lives everything that does not contribute to the one great objective.

In John 11:20–22, we read of the death of Lazarus. The Lord Jesus arrives on the scene and is met by Martha.

Now Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary was still sitting in the house. (v. 20)

Here you have again Martha the woman of action. "I must do something about this. I must go to the Lord."

Now Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. (v. 21)

Surely this is a tremendous attitude of faith toward the Lord; and these words were uttered by Martha, not Mary: "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."

What is she saying? "If You would have been present, You could have saved my brother from his illness. He would not have died." This is tremendous, and it is from Martha. Now she goes on to an even greater height of faith:

"But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." (v. 22).

"Even now," Martha says, "all is not lost."

Well, is that not wonderful? Has Martha, the busy woman with the complaining spirit, taken up with things, come to Mary's decision? I think not! For in verses 38 and 39 we read:

Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone."

Now the attitude of faith must become an act of faith. Next comes the test: "Take away the stone." Is the attitude of faith to be followed by the *act* of faith? Is the profession to be followed by the performance?

They are all gathered at the graveside. Only one person speaks. It is Martha. And what does she say in verse 39?

"Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days."

Where is her faith now? It is one thing to make a profession; it is quite a different thing to perform.

What does this reveal to us? Martha had an emotional spiritual experience because she had an inconsistent devotional life. Underline that, for this is always true of the person with an inconsistent devotional life. Today they are up in the heights, tomorrow down in the depths—an unstable, unreliable personality. "Lord, You can do anything; You can raise him from the dead." Then, "Oh no, Lord, he stinks. It can't be done."

Which are you? Martha or Mary? You must decide who you are to be. Have you ever chosen the one thing needful, the one thing that David chose? What was it? David chose to be occupied with the One he loved and to seek for Him with all his heart. Mary too chose the better

part, and it was not taken from her.

Great was her reward, for we read in John 12:2–7:

There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.

But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii, and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.

But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial."

What does this reveal to us? The person who makes the choice, who puts the one thing needful first, shares the innermost secrets of the heart of the Lord. It is that person to whom He will speak, for love demands a love of its kind.

The Lord Jesus loves us with all His heart. He desires that we love Him with all our heart; and until we do, we will never know the sweetness of His love for us. We will have some faint concept but that is all. With how many people do we share the secrets of our heart and with whom do we share them? We will be intimate with the person we know loves us, the person we know is com-

mitted to us, the person who has given himself or herself to us, and with none besides. It is so with our Lord. There must be the response of love to love.

Mary anointed Christ against His burial. How did she know? He revealed it to her. None of the others knew, but she knew. Why did He reveal it? Mary had chosen. She knew what it was to have intimate fellowship with her Lord; therefore, she received a great reward: the unspeakable honor of sharing the deep feelings of His heart.

Notes

1. Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1935), 254.
2. Carl F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Psalms*, vol. 5 of Old Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 356–57.

*Gracious God, we worship Thee,
Rev'rently we bow the knee;
Jesus Christ our only plea:
Father, we adore Thee.*



SAMUEL TREVOR FRANCIS