

Pace, Priority and Purpose for 2021

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During 2020 There were hopes and prayers that the **lockdowns** would become **slow-downs** and that many would take the time to **reconnect** with **God and family** due to a **slower pace**. Not sure that happened. What did seem to happen for many is that we used our time to become “**internet experts**” on racism, race relations, police brutality, virology, vaccines, masks, conspiracies, politics and politicians. So many had a friend of a friend, who was an insider of something, that had the real scoop about what was really happening, etc.

Result Too many frantically running to and fro, stating things that were unbalanced, untrue, and ungracious, while being angry and arguing, especially online. Many became divided and wounded. Generally speaking, I’m not sure we became more Christ-like in 2020. *Far too many used the lockdown for a throw-down!*

As you know God is all for **educating yourself**, He’s all for **taking a serious stand** on controversial issues, He’s all for us **risking life, limb and reputation** for the Kingdom. What the **Kingdom is not for** is a frenzied, fearful, suspicious response to circumstances in society that cause us to lose our testimony to the world, and our love for our brothers and sisters.

Today — I’m going to share some helpful things for us to consider as we start 2021. We’re going to unpack **Pace Problems, Priority Shifts, Purposes Fulfilled**.

Pace Problems

Look at Martha and Mary — sisters of Lazarus, close friends of Jesus

Luke 10:38-39

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.

- Martha welcomed Jesus — **she’s first to the door! She’s a doer!**
- Mary **also** sat at Jesus’ feet

Observation — both sisters sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word — that’s where **comparison ends**. Martha **didn’t seem to “get,” what she heard** — *didn’t understand what Jesus was trying to communicate*.

Luke 10:40-41

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." And Jesus answered and said to her, "**Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things.**"

- vs. 40 — **Martha distracted** much serving — distracted, literally “drug all around,” busybody, lacking composure and tact. Addicted to activity without advancing.
- **Approached Jesus** — explosive act, got in Jesus’ face, aggressive

- **Don't You care** — so frazzled and frustrated she's accusing Jesus of being non-caring — can you imagine?
- **Sister left me alone to serve** — self-pity, only me, belittling sister
- **Tell her to help me** — trying to control the situation (*because Jesus isn't*)

Application — two things — 1. Recipe to remain single; 2. What happens when you sit at Jesus' feet and *don't really get* what He's saying — you act like this.

- vs. 41 — **Martha, Martha...** uh oh... (*says her name twice*)
- **Worried** — though told not to, repeatedly, **Matthew 6:25, 28, 31, 34**
- **Troubled about many things** — inward anxiety and outward agitation

Application — Martha does “much serving” and troubled with “many things,” she's a “much” and “many” kind of person, and it's **hurting her** and **people around her**.

- The **tyranny of the urgent** is always upon her
- She's so **distracted, worried, and troubled** with the **lesser** — that she misses out on the **greater!**
- She **sits at Jesus' feet a bit** — but then **schedules herself into hypertension**.

Fact — **Martha has a Pace Problem** — so do many of us — a **little sitting at Jesus' feet... a lot of non-spiritual, non-kingdom, non-priority activity**. So little time for what really matters, too much thinking or sounding like Martha when we do participate in what really matters.

Before I expose Martha much more —

John 11:5

Now Jesus loved Martha...

- *as He does all explosive, distracted, worried, troubled, accusing, self-pitying, belittling, controlling Believers!*

Unpack some more of Martha in John 11 — events surrounding Lazarus' death

Jesus finally shows up after Lazarus passed

John 11:20

Now Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. (*Martha runs, Mary sits*).

John 11:21

Now Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” (*Accusation and guilt*).

John 11:28

And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, “The Teacher has come and is calling for you.” (*Secretly? No record Jesus called Mary. She wants to manipulate Mary and Jesus into a favorable outcome? Didn't she hear Jesus?*).

John 11:39

Jesus said, “**Take away the stone.**” Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, “Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days.” (*Doubting, negative, complaining*).

Sad — Martha has a *Pace Problem* that causes her to be explosive, distracted, worried, troubled, accusatory, self-pitying, belittling, controlling, manipulative, *doubting, negative, and complaining*.
YIKES!

Priority Shift — time for one

Luke 10:42

“But **ONE THING IS NEEDED**, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”

Application — *choose the one thing needed, to sit and hear Jesus’ word — really sit, and really hear!*

Psalms 27:4

One thing I have 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 in His temple.

Matthew 6:33

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

FACT —

IF we’ll choose the ONE NEEDED THING —

to seek God first,
dwell in His Presence,
sit at His feet,
hear His word,
behold His beauty,
inquire in His temple

He will add everything else to us

love so we can love,
joy so we can be strong,
peace so we can be composed,
patience so we can endure,
kindness so we can influence,
goodness so we can reflect Jesus,
faithfulness so we can stand,
gentleness so we can comfort,
self-control to remain focused.

Warning — *if we forsake or neglect the one thing, we become Martha.*

Purpose Fulfilled

Matthew 22:36-40

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Conclusion

Beloved — let’s never lose sight of what our **purpose is!**

- Love God, Love People — even our enemies We do that by having our **Priorities in Place**.
- Seek God first, dwell in His Presence, sit at His feet, hear His word, behold His beauty, inquire in His temple.
- We fulfill our purpose by having our **Pace in line with our Priorities**.

Let’s ask God’s Spirit to help us in 2021!

Discussion Question

1. In what ways do you identify yourself as a Martha?
2. How can you become more of a Mary?
3. Can you still be a dynamic in “business” if you are more like Mary?
4. How is wanting to “be in control” related to the great sin of “pride.”
5. How is the “spirit of Martha” diametrically opposed to Matthew 6:33?
6. What do you want your priority and purpose to be in 2021?
7. What do you need to change in your Pace?

NOTES