



REDISCOVER ...

# THE ART OF NEIGHBORING

**WHO HAS TIME FOR THAT?** • *Luke 10:38-42*

Pastor Kenneth Spiller • September 4, 2022

***BIG IDEA: You cannot be a good neighbor on a diet of constant activity.***

There are many reasons Christians don't interact with our neighbors as much as we should. One big reason is very practical: we're too busy. Busyness has a way of choking out the work of God in our lives.

➔ **What is the biggest reason that you don't interact with your neighbors?**

➔ **What things could you remove from your life that would create more space for interacting with your neighbors?**

Before we read this passage, let us consider where it is placed in Luke's gospel. This story is sandwiched in-between two important passages of scripture relating to our relationship with God: 1) the parable of the Good Samaritan, which teaches us we love God by loving others, and 2) Jesus's teaching on prayer, where He gives us the Lord's Prayer.

➔ **Why would Luke place the story of Mary and Martha between teachings on loving one's neighbor and prayer?**

One possible reason for its location is because Luke is emphasizing the importance of slowing down and listening to Jesus. As we meet the needs of those around us, we need to slow down to have time with Jesus to become empowered for service. If we spend our entire time meeting the needs of others we become physically, emotionally, and spiritually drained.

***AT THE HOME OF MARTHA AND MARY • Luke 10:38-42***

**LUKE 10:38-42 || As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me**



**to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"**

**"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."**

It has been said that Martha should have been sitting down beside Mary instead of working in the kitchen. Pastor Kenneth doesn't think that is what was happening here. Notice that Jesus never told Martha she was wrong for working or serving. He didn't rebuke her for not listening. In fact, the next time we read about Martha, in John 12:1-2, she's doing the exact same thing, serving. Martha is a doer.

The problem comes from what's going on *inside* of Martha. Martha is trying to prepare a meal for Jesus, and she's swamped. And where is Mary? Sitting down, doing nothing. And as the work continues to mount, as Martha gets further and further behind, Martha's frustration grows and grows to the point where she decides she's had enough. And we can see her point. We would be frustrated and annoyed too. If you have siblings, maybe you can understand how this situation starts to unravel for Martha.

**➔ Notice Jesus does not correct Martha for stating her feelings about her tasks and Mary's tasks. What does this story tell us about expressing our heart feelings to Jesus?**

Jesus cuts right to the heart of the issue and reveals that behind Martha's busy schedule, behind Martha's desire to serve Jesus, was a heart that was distracted and worried about many things. She was so focused on preparing the meal she ignored Jesus in the process. The Greek for "distracted" means "to be drawn in many different ways at the same time

**➔ Have you ever been praying and found yourself thinking about something else, like a shopping list or that day's agenda? How might you stop doing this?**

**➔ Have you ever opened your Bible or the Bible app on your phone to meditate on scripture and found yourself on social media instead?**

**➔ Have you ever been distracted while talking to someone — perhaps you were perusing social media, rearranging your desk, or getting ready for the next task of the day? What do these actions communicate to the person you're speaking with? What do they communicate to God?**

**If the devil  
cannot make us  
bad, he'll make  
us busy.**

-Corrie Ten Boom

This leads us to our main point: **You cannot be a good neighbor on a diet of constant activity.**

We need regular times and seasons of slowing down to sit at Jesus' feet. Even Jesus Himself left the busyness of life to simply be with His heavenly Father.

In the two other parts of their story (see *John 11:1 -12:8*), we see that Jesus responds to Martha and Mary as individuals. When Lazarus died and before he was raised from the dead, Jesus had a discussion with Martha, and he wept with Mary. As they served Jesus in their home, they served in two different ways but without a discussion of which way was better. Martha continued being practical in her service, Mary was more expressive. Both had learned that the focus of their service needed to be Jesus, and not how the other sister was serving, Martha learned that the more important thing is to focus on Jesus.

**Now here, you see, it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that.**

-The Red Queen, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*

➔ **How did Martha's change in focus lead to contentment in service to Jesus in the last part of her story?**

➔ **Do you need to change your focus in your service to Jesus? If so, how can you ask others to pray for you or to hold you accountable to make this change?**

When things get busy, the first thing that usually goes is our time with the Lord. Then what follows is His mission, like reaching out to our neighbors. Martha was not focused on the Lord and spending time with Him. Most of us could use a little more *Mary* and a little less *Martha* in our lives. Martha's problem is our problem too. Martha was so busy preparing the meal for Jesus that she didn't see Jesus.

Pastor Kenneth then shared four practical ways to lower the busyness in our lives so we can take the time we have and invest in what's important: things like family, our relationship with God, and God's mission to the world which includes our neighbors.

### 1. Discover the power of the word *or*.

One of the most important things we can do in life to combat busyness is to change our conjunctions. Instead of saying "and," we need to learn to say "or." Instead of soccer practice and guitar lessons, you and your child can pick soccer or guitar lessons. Instead of a TV show and a movie, it's the show or the movie. Instead of working late and taking work home, it's one or the other. Learn the power of the word *or*.

➔ **What are some activities in my life that would benefit from applying the word *or*?**

## 2. Discover the power of the word *no*.

When we prioritize sitting at Jesus' feet and serving Him, we need the courage to say *no* to what many people say *yes* to.

Saying *no* to things sounds so wise in theory and makes perfect sense ... until we have to actually start saying *no* to people: this is hard. We want to be available to everyone, so saying *no* isn't easy. But when we say *no*, it is so we can discover the power of the third point.

➔ **Where do you need to learn to say no, even if it isn't easy?**

## 3. Discover the power of the word *yes*.

We say *no* so we can say *yes* to the best things. We learn to say *no* so we can say *yes* to better things. Say *yes* to those things that build you up and that honor God. For example, Pastor Kenneth and Ari in their home have said *yes* to church; that means the church isn't optional for them or their kids. This is not just about attendance, they have said *yes* to being involved in the life of the church. Some of the things this means are: worship is not optional, tithing is nonnegotiable, they are a part of a community group, and they get involved in God's mission.

➔ **What are some areas that you need to say yes to? Ideas might include joining a Community Group, serving others in and outside the church, and reaching out to neighbors.**

## 4. Discover the power of *margin*.

Margin is simply the practice of making space in your life, of making room. For example: if you need to be somewhere at 1:30 p.m. and it takes 30 minutes to drive there, don't leave at 1 p.m. Give yourself some margin; leave 5-10 minutes earlier. That way, if you hit all the lights, you'll still be fine. Practice margin, and make space. You'll find you won't be as stressed out.

➔ **Where do you need to apply margin in your life? How can others help you do this?**

Martha was so busy that she missed Jesus as he visited her home. Jesus doesn't want what you can do... he wants you. Serving Jesus is a vital part of the Christian life, but along with that work must come alone time with the Lord. We must take the time to talk to Him, and we must spend the time it takes allowing Him to speak to us. **You cannot be a good neighbor on a diet of constant activity.**