

## **Open Hands: Stewarding with Kingdom Vision**

### **Prioritizing the Eternal: The Tyranny of the Urgent**

Key Scripture: Luke 10:38-42 (The Story of Martha and Mary)

*“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 few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”-Luke 10:38-42*

After creating the transition team in recent days, I can start taking my friend Brandon Webb's advice and stop being overwhelmed. I can stop working so much and start to rest. I can start honoring the sabbath and resting starting Friday into Saturday, so my mind and body can reset. I need to stop taking important business calls and checking emails every Friday into Saturday to start honoring the Sabbath. I need to start taking my time personally when I plan things for myself and for the congregation. We live in a world where the loudest noise gets the most attention. We are constantly busy, yet rarely feel fulfilled. The urgent are tasks that demand our immediate attention, such as a ringing phone, deadlines and someone or child needing a ride. The important tasks that have eternal significance, such as prayer, discipleship, serving the poor, deep intimacy with God. That’s why I went back to volunteering in Detroit and Oakland County to help the poor and homelessness to do my Godly duty as a man of God and Bishop. I put my obedience, discipleship and God first than in anything else. I do not depend on the world for nothing because I pray to God when I am living in a struggle for a breakthrough. I always got that breakthrough from God. The times lived in Detroit, Atlanta, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore. God has helped me in bad times in Atlanta when I got a breakthrough through prayer. I believe and continue to pray for his breakthrough when Christ Jesus is about to move me from the Eastside of Detroit to the Westside of Detroit next Tuesday afternoon. When I go to Chicago on December 2 on Amtrak, I can leave from the Westside of Detroit to go Chicago and go back to the Westside of Detroit when I come back to town.

Our lives are like a chalkboard. The urgent writes on it every minute, but the important writes on it once a day. If we erase and respond to the urgent, the important never gets written. We need to start putting important stuff in our life first, but putting God first by paying and giving to God for the month and/or the week first. Like I said in the last message, we need God at the head of our life first by living obedient to God. It is good that people pray to God and his kingdom, but it is still not enough for us. You need to have a prayer journal to take to services with you, go to church services weekly along with Sunday school and bible study. We need to be doing all we can to grow in Christ, not resist it or continue to live by the flesh during the week. We need to be living our life in the grace of God by stopping living by mammon and as a tax collector. Greed and gossip is a sin. Today, we will learn why Martha’s urgent work was rebuked and how to choose Mary’s better part prioritizing the eternal over the external. Martha's attitude, anxiety and distraction to her urgent work was rebuked. The Greek word distracted is periespato which means to be dragged all around or over occupied. Martha's heart was scattered by demands of serving. Martha's work was not done by love and joy. She was getting distracted by worrying, agitation, and upset about many things. Martha has distractions and was not focused on God during her work. Christ Jesus was sitting in the living room with Martha speaking to her, but it was not the better priority at the moment. Martha was confused with productivity by being busy, but she was not productive in the most essential way. Jesus taught that intimacy with him is eternal while a clean house and hot meal are temporal and temporary. She always missed the moment of lasting significance

and hospitality. Martha complained about Jesus and her focus shifted to the point she was concerned with fairness and completion than with fellowship and learning. Jesus was rebuking the spirit of hospitality which the hospitality was performed. Martha was corrected because she let a good thing become a good thing, resulting in anxiety, distraction and broken focus on the one who matters most. Mary's choice was recognized as what is better of listening to the master. Job, sin, living in bondage, and idolatry are forms of urgent tasks that take priority over better things. The urgency of deadlines, performance, and career advancement consumes all time and mental energy making prayer, rest and family time seem secondary or non-essential. The urgent demand of a compulsion, addiction, or secret habit constantly pulls attention, requiring energy to hide, manage, or satisfy the fleshy desire. Anything we elevate above God, such as wealth, status, relationships and comfort creates an urgent, ceaseless demand for time and devotion, consuming the worship that belongs to God alone. We get distracted, worried and upset because we are serving a demanding master, such as sin, idolatry, and the job market instead of resting in Christ. When we are perpetually driven by external demands known as the urgent rather than anchored in God peace known as the eternal, the inevitable result is anxiety and worry. Martha was worried and upset about many things because she had forgotten the stabilizing power of Jesus' presence. A lack of spiritual rest contributes heavily to mental fatigue and stress. Anger is a secondary emotion stemming from a feeling of being overwhelmed, powerless, or unjustly treated. Martha's intense focus on her duties led her to lash out at Mary and even Jesus about him caring for her. When we are governed by the Chaos of the urgent, we become easily irritable and critical of others. Focusing on the eternal like practicing forgiveness and patience is the antidote to the urgent leads to reaction of anger. The tyranny of the urgent is a universal spiritual danger that leads to urgent noise of career deadline, sinful compulsion or anxiety of born stress. We need to live and be obedient to Mary. The choice is to pause, sit at the feet of Jesus and choose the right thing that is needed because eternal relationship with God and Holy Spirit brings peace and perspective to our life.

Martha focusing on tasks damaged her spirit and her relationships about questioning Jesus. . Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he said. Mary understood that in the presence of Jesus that nothing else was urgent. Families today face several good things that become urgent tyrants. I apply Martha's story of good work to problems in families with so much busy scheduling today, such as children in three sports, two instrument lessons, and ace their advanced and AP classes. This overwhelmed calendar leads to exhaustion, stress and driving from dawn to dusk. You have parents that work excessive hours or take on overwhelming projects to ensure maximum comfort or social status leading to constant absence and burnout. That is why the church is hosting the Contentment in Christ Leadership Conference in Baltimore in January 2026. We have an urgent demand for work emails, social media notifications or endless entertainment on your phone or TV that interrupts our conversations, connections and focused attention in our home or wherever it is. This message also takes us back to parenting perfection and performance traps, such as being a perfect parent, flawless discipline of children, curated social media images that fuels anxiety, comparison and frustration with things that go wrong. Families get distracted, worried and upset about spending their energy on things that are temporary and external that lead to missed opportunities for deep and eternal connections with Jesus and his kingdom. Families need to build structures that prioritize peace, presence and spiritual growth over performance and external presence.

It is families that do not do this, but need to do this to strengthen their spiritual growth in God. I feel this need to happen in shared room housing because there are so many distractions and anxiety in shared room housing with anger, mental health, wickedness. Mary's path will help move families from being driven by external demands to be anchored by external peace creating a home where relationship and devotion are true priorities. It is called a 10-minute huddle after dinner or before bed where families and individuals gather daily.

2. Share one specific thing they are thankful for each day
3. Pray together

This what families and individuals need to do in their households to avoid worrying, distractions and anxiety daily:

1. Structure a white space policy to have an empty time for nothing specific to avoid busyness.
2. Say no to extra activity or event if it means sacrificing family dinner time, spiritual reading time or quiet rest.
3. Prioritize rest over revenue
4. Choose rest and presence over maximizing every opportunity or comfort.
5. Create a blessing list in a journal
6. Train the family to name things they are grateful for. Gratitude shifts the focus from the tasks that have not been done to the gifts that have already been received. This re-centers the family on God's provision instead of the world demands.
7. Sit at Jesus feet daily without any phone or electronic devices
8. Pray every morning and night before bed.
9. Read and meditate on the bible daily
10. You need to ask yourself what is God directing and asking you to do today that is eternal significance?

We must understand that we are called to live not for the praise of men or the comfort of the moment, but for eternal reward. We need to read and honor Colossians 3:23-24. When our motivation shifts from temporal approval to eternal approval reward, the urgent loses power. Martha got overwhelmed because she tried to do everything. That is why I created the new transition team for new leadership, so I can do more and stop trying to overwhelm and overwork myself. I hope my friends Brandon Webb and Jermaine Allen agree to be the transition team co-chairs. We need to set boundaries and learn how to say no to minor tasks and excessive work. We need to say yes to important and major priorities including family and the Holy Spirit.

1. Will you allow tyranny of the urgent to fill your days with stress and worry?
2. Will you choose the priority of the eternal to fill your life with purpose and lasting significance?
3. How many of you feel like you have been running on a treadmill this week?
4. What is the loudest noise in your life right now? (anger, wickedness, being around people with bipolar disorders and mental health problems, phone, financial deadline or social media).
5. When you look at your calendar for the past seven days, what percentage of your time was dedicated to urgent tasks versus important and eternal tasks?
6. Which sister do you relate to each day: Martha with stress or Mary with focus on God's presence?
7. What is one activity you spent hours on this week that next week will be completely gone, dirty or forgotten?
8. Who or what is making the most demands on your time right now?
9. How can you strategically use the word No this week to guard your spiritual priorities and create a white space?
10. What is one urgent tyrant in your life that you need to confess and ask them to hold you accountable for replacing with eternal priority?
11. Will you pick up your phone first or bible first?

Heavenly Father,

We confess that we often become slaves to the tyranny of the tyranny of the urgent. We are anxious,

distracted and worried by the demands of the world. We ask you for wisdom and discipline of Mary. Help us to sit at your feet, prioritize your voice, and commit to the few things that matter for eternity. Give us the courage to say no to the distracting noise so we can say yes to your will. In Jesus name, Amen.