

What Do You Seek?

Take-Home: The One Thing (Martha and Mary)

A standalone deep-dive session

What We Found

The philosopher Dallas Willard's whole prescription for spiritual health, in an exchange his friend John Ortberg recounts, was to ruthlessly eliminate hurry, and there was no second item. Then we entered a house in Bethany where the hostess who opened the door, whose serving bears the Church's own word for ministry, was coming apart: distracted, dragged in different directions, anxious and troubled about many things. Her sister had taken the disciple's seat at the Lord's feet, a chair that formal discipleship in her world rarely offered women, and when the complaint came to send her back to the kitchen, Jesus ratified the seat permanently: it shall not be taken away from her. His correction of Martha began with the tender, urgent doubled name, and his arithmetic was triage, not a verdict on work: one thing is needful. The portion Mary chose echoes the psalmist's old discovery (Psalm 16:5): God Himself as the inheritance that outlasts every estate. And the Church has never said Mary instead of Martha. St. Teresa's counsel is that Martha and Mary must combine, because action without the seat runs dry.

Voices Worth Keeping

St. Augustine Sermons 103 and 104 (summary)

Both sisters chose good things; but Martha's task belongs to the age that passes, and Mary's portion to the age that does not end, which is why it cannot be taken away.

St. Teresa of Avila The Interior Castle VII.4 (summary)

Martha and Mary must join together to host the Lord: the aim of prayer is the birth of good works, and love is shown not in delights but in deeds.

St. Gregory the Great *Moralia and homilies* (summary)

The active life is necessity, the contemplative life is desire; the first ends with time, the second begins here and is perfected in eternity.

Live It This Week

1. Sit for ten unproductive minutes once this week. Notice how hard the chair is to stay in.
2. Replace one "busy" with a true sentence about how you actually are.
3. Marthas: ask a Mary what they see from the seat. Marys: do the dishes once, unasked.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her." **Luke 10:41-42**

If You Want More

This session stands alone. The Bethany household returns in John 11-12; read ahead if you wish.

Catechism references: CCC 2709, 2727, 305.