

Reconciling Mary and Martha

By nature, I am a doer—and I like projects, whether they are related to decorating my home; running Strang Communications, the business my husband and I started in 1981; or helping a person get his marriage or his finances on track. But a number of years ago I learned that the activity of a Martha is meaningless without the heart of a Mary. We aren't to be one or the other, but both—at the same time.

In other words, our goal is not to break down our daily lives into segments, making sure that we “pray” as much as we “do.” Our goal is to learn how to pray and do simultaneously. Paul says we are to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). How is this possible when we have so many responsibilities to attend to?

The key, as Quaker Thomas Kelly describes in his book, *A Testament of Devotion*, is to live on two planes at once. It is possible, he says, to remain in continual communion with God while also carrying out the duties of our individual stations in life. Our spirits maintain the inner connection, and our minds and bodies do the work.

Andrew Murray calls this way of life “abiding in Christ.” It is not an optional way; it is the only way for those who truly want to fulfill their destinies.

Jesus commands us: “‘Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing’” (John 15:4-5, NKJV).

A branch does not detach itself from the vine to carry out its required function of producing grapes, any more than we are to

“disconnect” from Christ to take care of the demands of our external lives. We have to remain in Him in order to do that which we are appointed to do.

What often happens, however, is that we become distracted by our circumstances and find ourselves consumed with the demands of our natural lives. The “cares, riches, and pleasures of life” become “thorns” that spring up around us, choking off our life in Christ and causing us to “bring no fruit to maturity” (Luke 8:14,7). We may think we are accomplishing things, but Jesus says we are really unproductive when we focus on our outer lives to the exclusion of our inner ones.

He never meant for there to be a conflict between the two. They are not mutually exclusive. We integrate them as we reconcile the Mary and the Martha in us, keeping our spirits tuned to God and our hands busy with the work He has given us to do.

You may be a doer, like I am. Or perhaps your passion is relating to people. Whatever your personality, God created you to live your life from the spirit realm—fulfilling a dual call to intimacy and fruitful labor.