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Establishing Priorities through the Holy Spirit: Lessons from Mary and Martha

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There is a fascinating story in the bible which concerns Mary and her sister Martha. In the gospel according to Luke, Martha was preoccupied with the task of serving food; however, Mary was sitting and listening to Jesus (Luke 10:38-42). Martha invited our Lord and Savior into her home; however, she neglected to spend time with him. Making preparations to serve Jesus food was certainly an important and admirable task. In fact, at one point during his public ministry, Jesus told his disciples that “the greatest among you shall be your servant (Matthew 23:11).” However, spending quality time with Jesus was a task and a privilege that was more important than preparing food. The sacrifice that Martha was making was certainly not as important as listening to Jesus.

Sometimes the sacrifices that we make (e.g., giving tithes or offering) are not more important than being

obedient to the word of God (e.g., loving our neighbor as we love ourselves). King Samuel told Saul, “obedience is better than sacrifice” because Saul wanted to give an offering to God instead of following God’s word (1 Samuel 15:22). In order to do God’ work effectively, some Christian actions must take priority over other Christians actions. In short, the authority of the Holy Spirit must guide and inform the actions of all Christians in order to God’s work to be done effectively.

In the book of Acts, Peter tells us that the Holy Spirit is a gift from God (Acts 2:38). The Holy Spirit is a counselor, helper and comforter (John 14:26). We are able to commune with the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 2:14), and the Holy Spirit is able to give us joy (Thessalonians 1:6). We can be reborn or renewed through the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5), and the Holy Spirit will reveal things to us

(Hebrews 9:8). The Holy Spirit will give us the power and inspiration to preach (Mark 13:11), and the authority to do ministry (Acts 13:2). Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit, and it led him into the wilderness (Luke 4:1). Through prayer, meditating on God’s word, and accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we may encounter God’s presences through the Holy Spirit. God has given us talents, and God has asked us to do many things (e.g., feed the hungry and provide clothes to those who need clothing), and the Holy Spirit will help us to establish both our earthly and spiritually priorities. As we seek to fulfill the calling that God has placed upon our lives, let us continue to rely on the power and presence of the Holy Spirit to establish our priorities. Praise God, the Holy Spirit will tell us exactly what to do.