

One Thing

But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her." ~Luke 10:41-42

God calls us to do one thing. Follow him. Everything else is secondary for the Christian.

It is easy to become distracted from our primary goal as Christians. We may look to the important needs of our family, and try to heed worldly suggestions, sometimes stepping away from our centering nature of faith. We sidetrack from the most important thing.

We may get overloaded with the things at work, and not have time to read the bible as much as we once did. Church may become an option on Sunday rather than the norm. The devil sidetracked us, and we didn't even know it.

One of the most powerful books of faith other than the Bible that I have read is *The Screwtape Letters*, written by C.S. Lewis. In it the devil is portrayed as the good guy, evil being good, as he tries to show us the dangers of being sidetracked from faith by this evil force.

"It does not matter," he writes, "how small the sins are provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing. Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick. Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one--the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts."

Simple sidetracks from the main road that seem quite wonderful at the time take us away from the main track where the train of faith travels together. It is only after we are stuck in the quicksand of fantasy, or lost in the quagmire of sin, that we realize we cannot get back and may even not want to get back to the main track.

So beware of Satan and his minions. Beware of focusing on your own desires and plans and running over people who are doing the work of God more than you could ever hope to do it. Beware of becoming an emissary of the devil in what you thought was a sincere effort to do God's work. Beware of the temptations of the world which can ruin our lives if we get sidetracked, or killed, by them.

Ken Caminiti was a third basemen in Major League Baseball for 15 years, once hitting 40 home runs in a season. He died of a cocaine overdose at age 45. He wrote at one point, "I had a real good thing going for me, and I got sidetracked. It doesn't have to be that way. It doesn't have to be drugs. It doesn't have to be alcohol. That part of my life is over." But it wasn't.

What a sad story of a man who by the world's standards had it all. He was a good man, a very talented athlete, and successful beyond many of the world's highest standards. But he got sidetracked, and never got back.

Preachers can get sidetracked by their own dreams and desires. Congregations can get sidetracked by living in the past and not facing the future. Christians can get sidetracked by trying to love others and forgetting that Jesus calls us all to go and sin no more. Charles Swindoll said, "If I ever wrote a book on preaching, it would contain three words: Preach the Word. Get rid of all the other stuff that gets you sidetracked; preach the Word."

Life is full of interruptions. We all have them. Getting back on track is the constant task and delights of the Christian. "One of the major problems of life," wrote Martin Luther King, Jr, is "is learning how to handle the costly interruptions. The door that slams shut, the plan that got sidetracked, the marriage that failed. Or that lovely poem that didn't get written because someone knocked on the door."

The wonderful thing for Christians is that we have God calling us back to the main track where his train is waiting. Again and again return from the sidetrack of despair or doubt, and Jesus welcomes us aboard with a wave and a smile. He knew where we were, and he knew we were coming back.

One final thought, dear reader. Don't allow yourself to be sidetracked by people who may have your best interests at heart, but have no idea what they are doing. In addition, don't get sidetracked by people who are not on track.

Just as Jesus called Martha to focus on the one thing of serving him, God calls us to follow the tracks of the heavenly railroad to heaven. Learn the dangers of being sidetracked. Guard against them. When it does, and it will, walk with Jesus back to the main track to find the joys only he can help you discover.