

## What Is Time?

Time is one of the workplace's most precious and scarce resources. Much is said about time, some of which is contradictory. For example, a famous quote insists: *Time is money*. An unknown source responds: *Time is not money; time is life*. Both quotes claim to be true. But, since they contradict each other, what are we to conclude? What is time's real value? Luke's Gospel has a pertinent story (10: 38-42) which gives us Christ's perspective on this question, and its contradictory responses.

Jesus visited Mary and Martha in their workplace: their home. Both sisters wanted to honor Jesus and fulfill society's standards for hospitality. Hospitality required two things of hosts: *be* with your guests and *do* things for them. Mary chose to *be* with Jesus, and was attentive to everything he did and said. Martha chose to *do* tasks for Jesus, which would include preparing and serving refreshments.

As Martha worked, she became distracted by what she was doing. As a consequence, she became resentful of the differences she saw between what she and her sister were doing. She complained to Jesus and asked him to scold Mary for not helping her. Jesus responded by giving both sisters his perspective on work, time and living.

Jesus agreed that both hospitality's principles of *being* with and *doing* for one's guests are important. So, Mary was correct, being with Jesus. Martha was also correct, doing tasks for Jesus. Where Martha erred was in allowing herself to become distracted by what she was doing. Her attention had strayed from balancing hospitality's two halves to emphasizing one. Jesus' point, then, was not about how the sisters divided their labor. He was concerned about Martha's one-sided choice, and the consequences which resulted. His point was about *how* and *why* Martha did her tasks.

In light of Luke's story about how and why we make choices, I think that if we asked Jesus whether time's value is money or life, he would affirm both statements in their proper contexts. He would not respond with 'either-or' thinking. He would emphasize synergy between what we do, and our motives for *why* and *how*.

Time is the context in which we work and live. Money enables and evaluates workplace activity. But, money is only one piece in the workplace equation. Work, itself, expresses who and what we are as human beings - and being human is about life. So, Christ-centered work holds time, money and life in God-centered synergy...and balance. Luke's story gives us a case study of what happens when we let synergy get away from us. It also gives us Jesus' reminder how to avoid this mistake and why. May Martha's mistake and learning experience bless us in how we pursue our priorities.

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