

# “Is This the Person to Whom I Am Speaking?”

Presented by Rev. Kristen Lowe on 7/15/2018

At Crossroads United Methodist Church

Waunakee, WI

Scripture:

Luke 10:38-42

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “You are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Romans 8:38-39

For I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels won't, and all the powers of hell itself cannot keep God's love away. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, or where we are—high above the sky, or in the deepest ocean—nothing will ever be able to separate us from the love of God demonstrated by our Lord Jesus Christ when he died for us.

“Hello? Is this the Person to Whom I am Speaking?”



For those of you who are my age or older, you may remember Ernestine the Telephone Operator - a character created by Lily Tomlin, who originated on the sketch comedy series Laugh-In in the late 60s. Ernestine was a sarcastic, nasal switchboard operator, who counted the rings and greeted callers with “A gracious good morning to you” before launching into a verbal assault. And sometimes she would say, “Is this the person to whom I am speaking?”

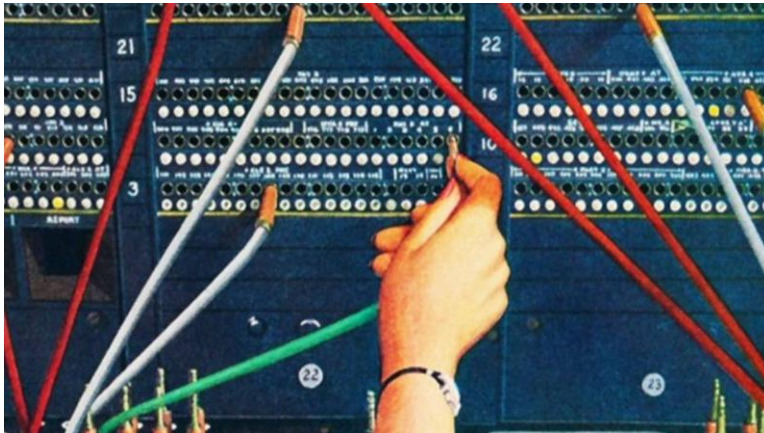
## “Is This the Person to Whom I Am Speaking?”



Ernestine is so strong in my memory because my mother was a bell-tell operator (as they called them back then). She impersonated Ernestine frequently when she would make a phone call from home, “One ringy dingy...” She also loved the line,



“Is this the person to whom I am speaking?” Of course, being young, I didn’t understand semantics and would say, “Of course it’s the person to whom you are speaking. Who else would it be!?!?”



I was fascinated by my mom’s work. She connected people. One person would call in by dialing O for operator. They would tell her who they wanted to contact and she would take the cord and connect them so they could have a two-way conversation. The conversation couldn’t happen without the connecting cord. In the days of party lines (and not the political kind), several families shared a phone line, so getting through to the person you really wanted to talk to was trickier. Sometimes there was also static on the line and you’d let the operator know you had a bad connection and it was really

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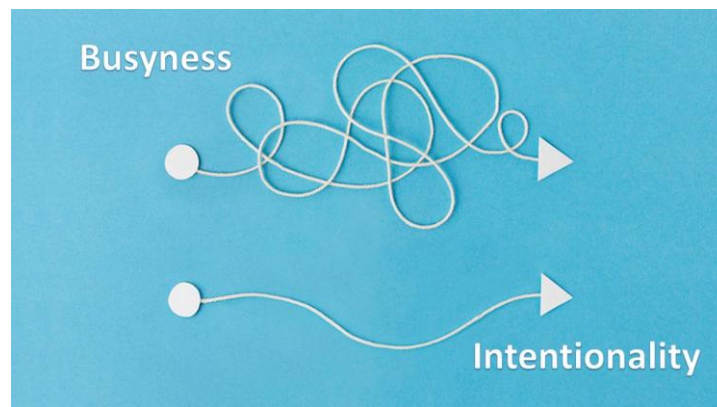
hard to hear the other person or even make sure you had the right person. This could be caused by several things:

- Weather
- A bad curly wire between the phone and the receiver
- Electrical interference
- A loose or damaged wire on the operator’s end

When this happened, it required patience and a little trouble shooting.



Even now, we still deal with the occasional dropped call or a bad connection and we have to really strain to hear the other person. Or, there’s also not getting through because, Oh! I left my phone in the other room... I had it shut off... It went right to voice mail... To have perfect communication, we need to make sure all of the connections are perfectly established and we have limited our distractions. Yes, distractions also add to a severing of communication. For instance, have you ever gone into another room to get something and when you get there you forget what it was you went in there for? It’s not hard to let our minds wander and lose track of ourselves.

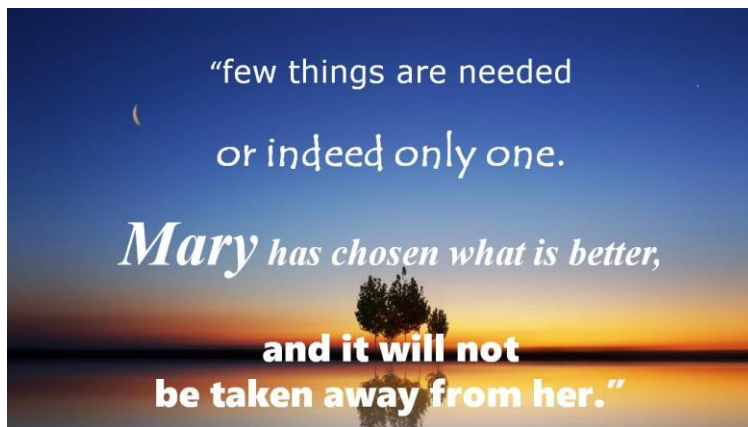


Something else hijacks our mind – if even for a moment, and then... as my mom used to say, “The train has left the track.” I later learned that this focus of attention a very difficult practice known as intentionality: Being completely intentional about what you are doing or saying... being completely in the present moment. God wants that of us. God wants our attention completely. When we have interference on the line... We can be sure that it is something on our end and we must trouble shoot.

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It's important to take into account that conversation with God is not a one way conversation. It is a two-way conversation. Sometimes I have to really remind myself of this. Both parties listen... and both parties speak. In order to hear the other person, we must stop talking, focus and listen long enough to hear, without interference, the voice of the other. In this case... God.



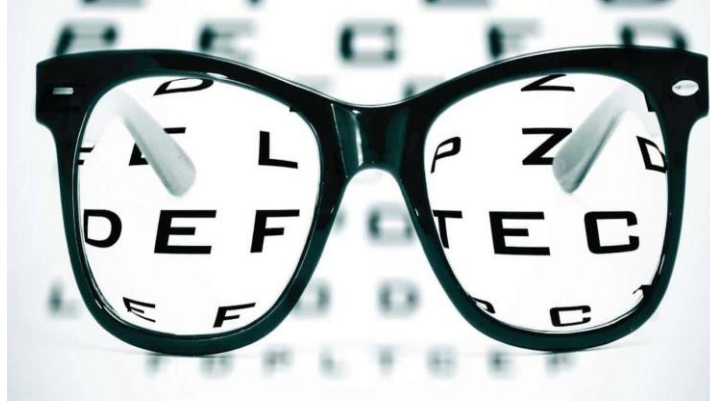
Maybe Martha was a really good multi-tasker. Maybe she could clean and listen to Jesus and interact with him at the same time. Maybe Jesus could have said, "Mary, go help your busy sister. After all, being busy is better than not being busy." But our scripture tells us that from Jesus' own lips, "Few things are needed or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her." More than ANYTHING, God wants to have a deep relationship with us. But so many things get in the way of our communication with God.

We have within us a yearning... a need to be made whole... because we live in a broken world. We are unsatisfied. So we scour the world to fill that yearning with other things. And you know... those other things don't sustain us. Some of us fill that void with work or business. If we keep busy, we won't have to deal with the hard stuff of self reflection or listening to God's leading. This is sometimes a tough thing to face because we don't want to deal with it.

God does not ask us, God commands us to take time to be holy. To fill ourselves with God's unfailing love. We are commanded to put God first... yes, above our cleaning, yes, above our busyness, yes... above all those things we feel like we would or should rather be doing. Are those things as important as our time sitting at the feet of Jesus?

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When we practice being still in God’s presence and focusing on the present moment... not thinking about the past, the future, the woulda-coulda-shouldas, the to-do lis... we allow God in, and we bask in the divine presence of God... there is nothing... not one thing in this entire world that is better. That’s the perfect place where our connection with the holy becomes very clear. It’s not easy.



This past week I got one of the two pair of glasses I ordered. I didn’t feel good most of the week. I was dizzy, I had a headache, my eyes hurt, I felt generally icky. I asked Tressie about it since she has glasses and she said, that if you’re transitioning to a new prescription, or in my case, first time glasses, it will be an adjustment as your eyes and mind get used to it. The problem is that I can see **so clearly** that my mind isn’t processing it well. I’ll get there. Do we have that problem with God sometimes? We think we’re in communication with God, but we don’t realize that we’re distracted and filled with line interference?



Mary had clear communication with Jesus. She spoke, she listened, she basked. And she models that clear communication for us today. Amen.