



Mary and Martha

Unusual Women in the Bible Zoom Bible Study

July 12, 2022

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. ³⁹ She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰ 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!"

⁴¹ "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Regrettably, this story has often been interpreted as Martha becoming the poster child for all that is wrong with the life of busyness, a life portrayed as inferior to the perfect life of contemplation. But is that the proper way to interpret this story?

Does Jesus approve of working hard and doing what you're supposed to do? Consider the parable of the talents.

Don't you usually feel sorry for Martha when you read this story? Let's look at this brief encounter between Martha and Jesus. There are several curious things about Martha's confrontation with Jesus:

- First, she says that Mary has left Martha to do all the work by herself. Was this strictly true?
- Second, why did Martha plead her case with Jesus instead of with Mary?
- Isn't it quite probable that Martha had servants to help her in the kitchen?
- Martha accuses Jesus of not caring for her. She feels overlooked, underappreciated.

Could it be that this lack of appreciation has been boiling up in Martha for a long time and it just spills over in this situation?

Lessons:

- When we are irritated with someone and feel we are not getting the respect or recognition we deserve, it is very easy to over-react. Can you imagine how many relationships would be improved if we simply decided to give the other person the benefit of the doubt?
- Reacting from anger or irritation or frustration almost always leaves you regretting what you said or did
- Put a practice in place to keep you from reacting rather than responding.

Now let's consider how Jesus responded to Martha:



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“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.”

What do you hear in Jesus’ response?

- Compassion not condemnation.

Only four times in the NT did Jesus repeat someone’s name twice. Each time the subject was in the wrong:

“Simon, Simon. . .”

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem,. . .”

“Saul, Saul. . .”

“Martha, Martha. . .”

In that culture repeating someone’s name twice was meant to soften the blow, to convey tenderness.

- Jesus saw that she was “worried and upset about many things.

Matthew 6:25 – 34: Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? ...

How often are you worried and upset about many things?

What can you do to get rid of this terrible propensity to be worried and upset?

If you want to obey Jesus by refusing to be a worrier and refusing to be upset by many things, then determine to develop your gratitude muscle.

What does it indicate about your faith when you are often worried and upset?

- Jesus tells Martha that Mary has chosen the better part. It is a choice Mary made.

“Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made.” Distractions! That’s what Jesus is talking about.

The difficulty you face in establishing this daily time with God should tell you that the enemy does not want you to do this.

Jesus said Mary had chosen the best thing—spending time with him.

Why is this the one necessary thing?

1. God’s Word is the wisdom you need to get through your day

2 Peter 1:3: His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

2 Timothy 3:15 – 17: and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2. The Word of God gives you an eternal perspective of the struggles and worries and upsets you're facing at the moment.

Suppose Martha had chosen to sit with Mary at Jesus' feet. What terrible thing would have happened?

The meal would not stay with them long. The teaching from Jesus could not be taken away.

How often do you allow the pressures of life to crowd in on you and cause you to be "distracted"?

Deuteronomy 8:3: He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

The things that distract you, that worry and upset you, do not last forever. You can lose just about everything in life, but you won't lose the time you spend with Jesus and God's Word.

There are some questions you'll find on the poll. Please take time to answer those and then we'll discuss the results.

POLL

What is your biggest enemy(ies) in spending consistent time alone with God?

- ☐ The tyranny of the urgent
- ☐ Don't have the time. Life is already too busy, too crowded
- ☐ Laziness
- ☐ Don't know how to spend meaningful time with God
- ☐ Always seems very rote and dry and unproductive
- ☐ Seems like a duty rather than a privilege
- ☐ I tried but didn't get anything out of it

What are you willing to do to make the main thing—the better thing—the top priority in your life?

What About Mary?

Mary no doubt was the only woman sitting there and listening to Jesus. I wonder if the disciples and other men found this inappropriate?

Notice that every time we encounter Mary of Bethany in the Gospels, she is at Jesus' feet:

- Here when Jesus is teaching in verse 39: She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said.
- When Lazarus died. John 11:32: When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."
- When she anointed Jesus before his death.

John 12:3-8:

Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ⁵"Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." ⁶He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

⁷"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. ⁸You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

Wiping the feet of someone was a degrading act in Jewish culture.

Jesus is very aware of what the next few days will bring. This act on Mary's part no doubt brought much comfort to Jesus, as he recognized that the ointment was to prepare him for the crucifixion.

POLL:

Are you more attracted to Mary or Martha? If so, why?