

"Maintaining A Much-Needed Balance In Life"



Mary Martha

It's easy to focus on Martha's apparent frustration and anger, but I want you to consider her in a little different light. Martha is not really a bad person. In fact, she is a woman of dedication and she is a doer. I can just imagine that she is the kind of woman that probably seldom complains, seldom misses the smallest details, and she can always be counted on when you need her. Martha is certainly a commendable

woman. Thank God for the Martha's of the world! This story is not in the Bible to teach us that serving is bad and that sitting is good. Under different circumstances serving may have been the best course of action. Instead, this is a story about maintaining a much-needed balance in life. It's a story about the need to recognize that we are human, we stumble, and we fall short. It's a story about being human and how we desperately need to realize just how human we are. It's a story about setting priorities and making the best choices in life. In life we are not usually confronted with choices that are outright good vs. bad! Those are the easy ones to make. But, oh how difficult are the everyday choices between what is good and what is best!

"Learning To Rest In Him"



"Come To Me, All You Who Labor And Heavy Laden And I Will Give You Rest"

How about you? Is your life filled with purpose and peace or does your life look more like Martha's life — stressed and frayed? When you accept Christ then you are able to accept yourself and you become empowered to accept others. There is good news for the **"over**

worked, and burnt out!" That good news is that you can experience God's rest and acceptance today. Where do you start? First, recognize that you are human. Like all humans we fall short (Romans 3:23). We cannot make it in life without Jesus Christ — His grace and power. Even Martha's need Jesus. Second, give Jesus Christ complete control of your life. Simply said, don't try to be superwoman (or superman for that matter) but let Christ give you His peace and rest. Jesus' words still ring true for us today: "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden [distracted, anxious, tired, frustrated], and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).



*Worship
Mary Honored
Him As A Teacher*

*Serve
Martha Honored
Christ As A Guest*

*"Having a
Mary's
Heart
In a
Martha's
World"*



"We Can Identify With Mary And Martha"

The story of Mary and Martha has long been one of the most treasured narratives in the Scripture. Who doesn't identify with hardworking Martha, frustrated with her captivated sister at the feet of the Lord? And who doesn't admire the single-minded devotion of Mary? She was so enraptured with Jesus' teaching that, to quote the beloved hymn, **"Turn your Eyes Upon Jesus"** **"And the things of earth had grown strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."** It all started when Jesus came to Bethany, to visit the home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. He had a profound love for their family, and it's clear from Luke's account that Jesus made Himself at home in their house. Certainly hospitality was a special hallmark of this family. Martha in particular is portrayed everywhere as a meticulous hostess. The fact that her name was usually listed first whenever she's named with her siblings implies strongly that she was the elder sister of Mary and Lazarus. But this older sister, a noble and beloved follower of Jesus, was in for a surprise. At the end of Luke 10, Jesus gave Martha a mild rebuke and a strong lesson about where her real priorities ought to lie. The passage is short but rich. Luke writes: "Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."

(Luke 10:38-42)

"The Stark Contrast Between These Two Sisters"

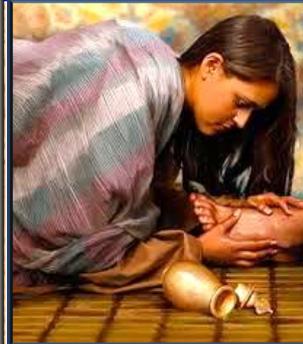
In Luke 10:38-42 we discover an occasion where the stark contrast between these two sisters, Martha and Mary, is obvious. Mary is sitting at the feet of Jesus. Martha is busy **"With Much Serving."** Mary is enthralled as she sits at the feet of the Savior. Martha is enraged as she busily paces back and forth from the kitchen to the living room. The Bible

tells us (Luke 10:38) that Martha welcomed Jesus into her house. Martha fussed over her hostess duties and she wanted everything to be just right. She was a conscientious and considerate hostess, and these were admirable traits. Much in her behavior was commendable. I love the way Jesus came across in this scene. He was the perfect houseguest. He instantly made Himself at home. He enjoyed the fellowship and conversation, and as always, His contribution to the discussion was instructive and enlightening. No doubt His disciples were asking Him questions, and He was giving answers that were thought-provoking, authoritative, and utterly edifying. Mary's instinct was to sit at His feet and listen. Martha, ever the fussy one, went right to work with her preparations. Soon, however, Martha grew irritable with Mary. I'm sure it's easy for you to imagine how her exasperation might have elevated. At first, she probably tried to hint in a "subtle" way that she needed help, by making extra noise—maybe moving some pots and pans around with a little more vigor than the situation really required, and then by letting some utensils or cookware clatter together loudly in a washbasin. Martha might have cleared her throat or exhaled a few times loudly enough to be heard in the next room. Anything to remind Mary that her sister was expecting a little help. When all of that failed, Martha probably tried to peek around the corner or walk briskly through to the dining room, hoping to catch Mary's eye. In the end, however, she just gave up all pretense of subtlety or civility and aired her grievance against Mary right in front of Jesus. In fact, she complained to Him and asked Him to intervene and set Mary straight. She is essentially said "Lord, if you really cared about me you would rebuke my sister Mary and tell her to get in the kitchen." Martha is ordering Jesus around and telling Him what to do! Anger, frustration, and resentment often comes out in this kind of controlling way. When people do not act the way we want them to we often want someone else to straighten the person out for us.

"Martha's Intentions Were Noble"

What Martha was doing was by no means a bad thing. She was waiting on Christ and her other guests. In a very practical and functional sense, she was acting as servant to all, just as Christ had so often commanded. She no doubt began with the best of motives and the noblest of intentions. But the moment she stopped listening to Christ and made something other than Him the focus of her heart and attention, her perspective became very self-centered. At that point, even her service to Christ became tainted with self-absorption and spoiled by a very uncharitable failure to assume

the best of her sister. Martha was showing an attitude of sinful pride that made her susceptible to other kinds of evil as well: anger, resentment, jealousy, distrust, a critical spirit, judgmentalism, and unkindness. All of that flared up in Martha in a matter of minutes. She turned her attention from Christ and began watching Mary with a critical eye. Naturally, it began to ruin the whole evening for Martha.

"Mary Recognized The True Importance of This Occasion"

Mary, by contrast, was so consumed with thoughts of Christ that she became completely oblivious to everything else. She sat at His feet and listened to Him intently, absorbing His every word and nuance. She was by no means being lazy. She simply understood the true importance of this occasion. The Son of God Himself was a guest in her home. Listening to Him and worshiping Him were at that moment the very best use of Mary's energies and the one right place for her to focus her

attention. One thing that stood out about Mary of Bethany was her keen ability to observe and understand the heart of Christ. Mary seemed to be able to discern Jesus' true meaning even better than any of the twelve disciples. Her gesture of anointing Him in preparation for His burial at the beginning of that final week in Jerusalem (John 12:1-7) shows a remarkably mature understanding. That was the fruit of her willingness to sit still, listen, and ponder. It was the very thing that always made Mary such a sharp contrast to Martha, whose first inclination was usually act—or react.