

## **Martha and Mary**

**– for Cornerstone youth 10-28-04**

Luke 10:38-42 (NIV)

*<sup>38</sup> As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. <sup>39</sup> She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. <sup>40</sup> 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!" <sup>41</sup> "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, <sup>42</sup> but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."*

Jesus often stayed with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus in their home in Bethany, just two miles from Jerusalem. These two sisters and brother became very close to Jesus. Another passage tells us that Jesus loved them. We can see that it was Martha who opened her home to Him. She may have been the widow of the man to whom the home originally belonged. This would explain why it was at her invitation and not that of her brother, the man in the home, Lazarus. There were few inns in Jesus' day. Many inns were brothels, so hospitality was expected when one traveled among the devout Jewish villages.

The Jewish home usually had an entrance on a rectangular room with only the back part being covered with a roof. This was the kitchen and work area. Small homes had one other room off this entry area, larger homes had one long room and two or three small rooms, depending on the size of the family. Sometimes two or three families lived in a dwelling.

Mary sat at Jesus' feet while He shared with the disciples and Lazarus. We don't have any idea what He was speaking about, but I wonder if it wasn't about our need to hear from God, the need to receive our daily manna. Jesus was different from most rabbi in that he allowed women followers. There may have been some other women there with Mary in their large room listening to Jesus as He spoke the words of life.

Can you imagine for a moment, yourself sitting on that dirt floor, listening to Jesus talk about God's love for you. See His eyes go from person to person and then they meet yours, and you know He can see into your very soul. The words He speaks at that moment go straight into your spirit. You feel like you swallowed a fireball. Somehow you know every word He speaks is truth, not just true as opposed to false, eternal, unchanging truth. You know that what you are understanding is just a fraction of what He is saying. The moment is an investment into your eternal life. These words will live with you forever, after death, throughout eternity. But you also know that accepting this precious gift will come at a great cost. Your life can no longer be living for selfish gain, for

personal pleasure, for momentary satisfaction. Somehow you know there will be a great cost to pay. You will be looked up to because of what you have heard, but you will also be hated because of these words flowing from His lips.

Then suddenly, Martha sticks her head in from the kitchen area. *"Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"* "Lord, don't You care?" Have you ever asked the same question? If you were sitting in that room with Mary you might have been tempted to shout, "Of course He does, be quiet!" But no one said anything, probably because they had all wondered the same thing. Does He care? When everyone else leaves all the dishes and I am stuck with them, does Jesus care? When there is more on my list to do than I can possibly get done, does Jesus care? When the demands of life are more than I can handle, does He care? When my friends let me down and my family doesn't seem to understand, does He care?

He cares more than you will ever know. He cares so much He feels every pain you feel, sharing the hurt with you. No one will ever care like Jesus. How do I know? Because I learned He was with me when my Dad took his life and my mother almost died. He was with me when my friends abandoned me. He shared my pain when I lost the job I had given up everything for. He was with me when I backslid and betrayed all that He had done for me. Still, He shared my pain when I was so depressed I thought of ending my life, even when it was the result of my own sin. He cared. He was with me. I found the wonderful verse that says so in Hebrews. (Hebrews 4:15) I've experienced it a thousand times. God cares more than we will ever know. He cares so much He gave His only Son. Could anyone care more than that?

So, did Jesus care that Martha got stuck with the work that the verse before says "had to" be done? The problem was this; it distracted her from what was even more needful. They all needed to eat. Sure they could have fasted a meal, but that wouldn't make Martha a very good host, would it? What was the distraction? Getting the meal done on time? Looking like a good host? Having people say nice things about her?

Martha is demanding that Jesus order Mary to leave that wonderful place at Jesus' feet and go do the women's work. Haven't we all made similar demands. "It's Heather's turn to do dishes, at least she could help me!" or "Lord, why doesn't anyone else in church help with this project?" Let's look at Jesus' answer.

<sup>41</sup> *"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, <sup>42</sup> but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."*

Don't you love it that the Lord knows your name? He calls His sheep by name. We could say that with all kinds of intonation, and it would mean many different things, from scolding to pity, but the sound I hear is compassion. "You are worried and upset about many things." It isn't just the meal preparation. You are a worrywart! You worry about what people will think. You worry about the

**Commented [notes1]:** 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Heb 4:15 (NIV)

supplies running out. You worry that someone will not like it. You worry that it will be too late in the evening. Where is your trust in the God that is over all circumstances? Do you really believe that we just happened to arrive this late in the day and that we expect you to instantly serve dinner to a crowd on time? Do you think God expects you to do what you aren't physically able to? Do you think that perhaps God brought them at this hour so you would give up trying so hard and just trust Him? If they don't eat will they die? Will the world end? So what are you all freaked out about? Just chill. Take an antacid and enjoy the words of the Creator of heaven and earth.

Not only does she worry... wait a minute... no one in here worries do they? Come on, time to confess. Who worries over things like grades, looks, clothes, finances, and friendships? Raise your hand. "Martha, Martha." Do you hear Jesus compassionately call your name? "One thing is needful!"

Not only was Martha a worrier, she was upset. She let her worry develop into being upset. Frustration was her normal operational mode. No one did what they should, and she always ended up under pressure. That always makes her frustrated, even angry. You can't relate...can you? Were any of you upset over something today? OK – some thingS because, you'll notice in this verse Jesus says, "many things". Lots of things worried and upset Martha.

That last verse has a little variation in some manuscripts. It reads, "...but only a few things are needful." Yes, you have to eat. But maybe you don't have to eat on time, or maybe it could be simpler than you had planned. That passage could actually mean that Jesus was referring to a one-course simple meal. In other words, "Just put some bread on the table; that's good enough."

So many of our physical wants we think are physical needs. So many of society's expectations are not God's expectations. I have had times in my life when I lived just fine on next to nothing. The simpler you make your life, the less distractions you have. We live in a culture that has so many expectations that bring almost unlimited distractions. When we accept those expectations we end up in Martha's shoes, worried and upset.

Do yourself a favor? Next time you find yourself worried and upset, ask yourself what your expectation is. Is it realistic? Is it God's expectation? Will the world come to an end if it doesn't happen? And then sit down, and be still, and ask God what He wants you to do. If He wants you to do it, He'll help you get it done. Will you do that? I mean really take it home with you and live it?

*<sup>42</sup> but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."*

Mary made an intentional choice. She broke out of her expected role and took this very unique opportunity to sit and listen to her Creator speak words of life that reverberated deep down in her Spirit. How could she get up and walk away? Sometimes you find God is working, speaking, moving in your life. That's the

time to drop everything and focus on Him. God will take care of what ever else was expected of you.

You probably know when God is speaking to you. The more in tune we are with God, the more we see it happen. I started to read something the morning that I was working on this message, and the Lord began to speak to me through what I was reading. I put off my usual routine. Set my whole schedule aside and focused on this one thing. I took notes in my journal about what the Lord was saying. I expect this one thing will change my life and is the answer to prayer that I've been asking for an answer to. But if I was too distracted by what "had to" be done, I would have missed it.

One thing is needed! Mary chose that one thing. Sit and listen. When He is speaking, sit and listen to the words of life. Every great man or woman of God I have read about had a special time when they listened to the Lord each day. One martyr that died this year took two hours in the morning and two in the evening just to worship. Just before he was killed, he prayed for two at noon, and God answered with eternal time for worship. Enoch walked with God all day everyday until God may have said something like, "Come on up here, since you live here all the time any way." These men found the one thing that was most important in life.

Jesus exemplified it. He was always getting alone to pray for the Father's direction. He said He did nothing without the Father's instruction. Don't miss the one thing in life that is really needed. There are a million things that distract you from that one thing, but if you want to find out what you are here for, your real purpose in life, you have to grab hold of the one thing that is needed and realize the other things are not as needed.

Think of it this way, if you didn't breathe automatically, don't you think it would be on your mind all the time? It is needful. It is one thing that is needful, right? If you get distracted and all wrapped up in the things of daily life and forgot to breathe, you'd die. Well, guess what, if you forget to listen to Jesus through His word and prayer, you die spiritually. It is one thing that is needed! Even more than breathing, you need to hear from Jesus, your Creator. Your body is temporal; your soul is eternal! Which is more needed, breathing or hearing from God?

Jesus follows this with a promise. If you choose this, taking time with Him, He won't take it from you. Now, you might fall back into distraction, but Jesus won't take it from you. That means to me that for the man that prayed and worshipped four hours everyday, God made sure that life's urgencies and financial support were taken care of. God won't take that from anyone who chooses it. If God would have allowed him to live on, I'm sure he would have had those 6 hours he was praying for, and God would have provided all his needs. If you will take time to be with Jesus, He will see that the necessities of life don't pull you away from the one thing you need.

Now that does not mean that you will not give it up for lack of faith or desire. It is a daily choice. What has your choice been today? Have you had the privilege of sitting at Jesus' feet and hearing Him? If not? Why not? Didn't get up early enough? Why not? Stayed up too late? Whose choice was that? It is up to you, not your parents, teachers, pastor, or friends. What are you going to do about it? Jesus said, <sup>42</sup> *but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.*" It was Mary's choice to turn away from what others were doing or expected and refuse to be distracted.

You have the same choice before you. You will go home today and do the same things, or you will let this message change your life and head it in a direction that will affect lives and really matter in eternity. Your choice! No demands of the world or making a living or people can take that from you. God gives it to you and won't take it from you. No excuses. What will you do? He sent me here and laid this on my heart for one reason, to let you know that when the Devil gives you all kinds of reasons that you can't take the time, He is lying! It is your choice. That is a gift of God. If you choose to, He won't take it from you. But be prepared for a battle, because the enemy of your soul will try to tell you God can't keep His word. Just remember who the Liar is.

Decision time. What will you do with the truth you have just heard? You will choose not to act or you will make a life long commitment to sit at Jesus' feet each day. Sure, there is a compromising in between place, but that usually ends in choosing not to. If you pay attention to the distractions, they will eventually pull you away.

You have gift offered to you. Sit down beside Mary right now. Close your eyes and join her again there at Jesus' feet. His hand is holding out to a precious gift, time with Him each day. In your heart you know it is His word, unchanging eternal truth, more precious than anything in this world. You can take it, if you will. But you know deep inside that if you do, your life will never be the same. It will mean a new direction, a new purpose, a new meaning and life goal. It will change your thoughts, your words and your actions. It may even mean a change in your life's career. Your choice! If you don't take it, you leave it there in His hand. The decision is yours.