

## ***Session 14 Mary of Bethany: Extravagant Devotion to Jesus***

### **I. GOD’S FIRST PRIORITY: THAT WE LOVE GOD WITH ALL OUR HEART**

- A. The Spirit is establishing the first commandment in first place in the Church worldwide. By God’s grace we must intentionally cultivate the ability to be responsive to God with wholehearted love.

***<sup>37</sup>You shall love the LORD...with all your heart... <sup>38</sup>This is the first and great commandment. (Mt. 22:37-38)***

- B. Loving God with all our heart is the ***first*** commandment because it is the first priority to God. It is ***great*** because it has great impact on God’s heart and our heart. It is the greatest lifestyle.

### **II. THE EXTRAVAGANT DEVOTION OF MARY OF BETHANY: FEEDING ON THE WORD**

- A. Mary was never mentioned in the book of Acts or in church history. She was not known by people for her public ministry. However, she will be known forever for her extravagant love for Jesus.

***<sup>38</sup>A certain woman named Martha welcomed Him [Jesus] into her house. <sup>39</sup>She had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word. <sup>40</sup>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.” <sup>41</sup>Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled [bothered; NAS] about many things. <sup>42</sup>But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.” (Lk. 10:38-42)***

- B. ***Sat at Jesus’ feet***: The Spirit emphasized that Mary sat at Jesus’ feet to hear His Word (10:39). Mary is mentioned in three occasions in Scripture. Each time the Spirit highlights her as sitting at the feet of Jesus (Lk. 10:39; Jn. 11:32; 12:3 [Mt. 26:6-13; Mk. 14:3-9]). Reading Scripture is meant to help us to talk with God by giving us the “conversational material” used in devotional prayer.

***For free notes: How to Meditate on the Word; How to Pray-Read the Word, see [mikebickle.org](http://mikebickle.org)***

- C. ***Distracted***: Martha was distracted with much serving (10:40). Martha appealed to the biblical call to serve people. Jesus did not correct Martha for serving but for serving with a wrong spirit.
- D. ***One thing is needed***: Sitting at the feet of Jesus positions us to be empowered by Holy Spirit. Jesus settled the issue of how important this heart posture and lifestyle is. There is no substitute for this.
- E. ***The good part***: Jesus honored the wisdom and power of this lifestyle by calling it “good.”
- F. ***Has chosen***: Jesus declared that Mary chose this lifestyle (10:42). We also must choose it. No one can choose it for us. Cultivating a heart of extravagant devotion to Jesus takes time and effort.
- G. ***Not taken away***: Jesus prophesied that Mary’s heart of devotion would not be taken away from her (10:42). Grace for a lifestyle of extravagant devotion could be sustained throughout her life if she continued to choose it. At the judgment seat of Christ, her life will be rewarded (1 Cor. 3:14).

### III. THE EXTRAVAGANT DEVOTION OF MARY OF BETHANY: “WASTING” HER LIFE

- A. Mary’s lifestyle of choosing “good” by hearing the Word equipped her for other “good” choices.  
**Principle:** Unusual acts of devotion come from cultivating a spirit of devotion as a lifestyle.  
**<sup>3</sup>Being in Bethany at the house of Simon...as He sat at the table, a woman [Mary; Jn. 12:3] came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard [perfume]. She broke the flask and poured it on His head. <sup>4</sup>Some [apostles] were indignant...and said, “Why was this...oil wasted? <sup>5</sup>It might have been sold for...300 denarii [one year’s wages] and given to the poor.” They criticized her sharply. <sup>6</sup>Jesus said, “Let her alone...she has done a good work for Me... <sup>9</sup>Wherever this gospel is preached...what this woman has done will be told as a memorial to her.” (Mk. 14:3-9)**
- B. **Very costly:** The perfume was worth 300 denarii (a year’s wages). Jesus told His disciples that He was to be crucified in two days (Mt. 26:2). Mary seems to have been the only one who “heard” Him, and thus she poured her perfume on Him (the fragrance was on both of them at the cross).  
**<sup>3</sup>Mary...wiped His feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance... (Jn. 12:3)**
- C. **Criticized:** The apostles appealed to serving the poor as their reason to criticize her extravagance; that is, they appealed to a scriptural mandate to help the poor. Those who love Jesus like Mary will receive criticism sometimes from those who want the gift of salvation without deeply loving Jesus.
- D. **Why this waste:** Anything above minimum commitment to God is seen as an “unnecessary waste.” To “waste on Jesus” money, exceptional musical talent, or a brilliant mind with good career opportunities is regarded by some as an unnecessary waste of one’s life and talents.
- E. **Let her alone:** Jesus vindicated Mary (14:6). He will openly reward devotion in the age to come.
- F. **A good work:** A year earlier (in Luke 10), Jesus had commended Mary for choosing the “good” part in sitting at His feet to hear His word; she developed her personal history in God in this way.
- G. **Memorial:** Mary’s extravagant devotion is remembered by others because God remembers it. C.T. Studd wrote, “**Only one life, t’will soon be past. Only what’s done for Christ will last.**”
- H. **What are you wasting your life on?** Those seeking to be extravagantly devoted are not content with the minimum requirement of salvation. They ask, “How far will You let me go in devotion to You?”
- I. Regularly recommitting to earnestly pursue Jesus for decades is the definition of living radically before God. David sought to sustain his passion for God for decades—“all the days” of his life.  
**<sup>4</sup>One thing I have desired...all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD... (Ps. 27:4)**
- J. Daniel faithfully sustained his prayer life for decades (from his teen years until his 80s). We are not radical or extravagant in our devotion to Jesus for seeking Him diligently for only a few months.  
**<sup>10</sup>Daniel...knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days. [605-539 BC; for over 60 years] (Dan. 6:10)**