

# AT HOME WITH MARY AND MARTHA

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Luke 10:38-42

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INTRO.

-- We're just getting started with a series called "On the Way to the Cross" that will hopefully prepare us for a more meaningful celebration of the Easter season. In this series we're following Jesus as He makes His final journey to Jerusalem and to the fulfillment of His mission on earth - giving Himself for us on the Cross. In the process of following Jesus on His way to the Cross, we'll gain valuable insights into what it means to be a disciple.

-- As we saw last week, the call that Jesus gives to disciples is "Follow me." Disciples are called to follow - to go where Jesus goes and do what He commands. And disciples are called to follow a particular person - Jesus. Jesus is to be the one on whom disciples keep their focus. The life of the disciple is a Christ-centered life.

-- We get some really important insight into what it means to live a Christ-centered life in the story of Jesus' visit with 2 sisters named Martha and Mary in Luke 10:38-42.

Luke 10:38-42

## I. THE STORY (10:38-42)

-- The sisters Martha and Mary have a brother who is not part of this story. His name is Lazarus, the one whom Jesus raised from the dead. These siblings live in a village named Bethany about 5 miles outside of Jerusalem. They are close friends with Jesus, and it appears that Jesus often stayed with them when He went to Jerusalem.

This passage in Luke 10 seems to indicate that the house actually belonged to Martha and that she may have been the oldest.

-- The "they" in verse 38 refers to Jesus and the disciples traveling with Him. When Martha receives Jesus into her home, she is also welcoming those who are traveling with Jesus - the 12 Disciples and possibly even some others. So she is playing hostess to a rather large group. Think what it's like when your extended family gets together for a special occasion, like a Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner, for example, and you get an idea of what it's like in Martha's house.

-- Right away, we see that these two sisters have distinct and very different personalities. Martha, as I said, is probably the older one, which means, of course, that she is the most responsible. We first-borns know that we're always the most responsible child in the family. So Martha acts just like a typical responsible first-born: she welcomes Jesus and the big group of disciples with Him and immediately starts fixing a big meal for them.

-- While Martha is busy fixing dinner, Jesus sits down and starts to teach His disciples, and guess what Mary does. She behaves just like a typical irresponsible baby of the family. Instead of going into the kitchen to help her overwhelmed sister with the cooking, Mary plops herself down with the men and sits right in front of Jesus to listen to His teachings.

-- It's not too hard to imagine what Martha thinks about this. The more Martha hurries around trying to fix a great meal for her honored guest and His companions, working all by herself, the more she gets annoyed with the fact that Mary isn't helping.

Now, it's easy for me to imagine that Martha doesn't try to hide her annoyance and tries to get Mary's attention by banging pots and slamming things on the table. Martha probably does something that all husbands are very familiar with - gives Mary "the look." You know, the stare that says, "You're in big trouble."

-- But Mary is oblivious to all this. Mary just keeps on sitting and listening to Jesus, and Martha keeps on boiling. We used to joke in my family that when my grandmother got upset she'd flit around the kitchen, moving so briskly that bottom of her apron would actually make a snapping sound. Well, Martha's apron is really snapping, but Mary isn't paying any attention to it.

-- Finally, Martha boils over, and she comes into the room where Jesus is seated and interrupts His

teaching and explodes, "Lord! I don't get it! You don't seem to care that my sister is just sitting here and leaving it all up to me to get this meal ready for all of you - ALL BY MYSELF! Tell her to get up off her lazy &hellip; rear and HELP ME!!"

-- You can imagine everyone sits there in stunned silence. And then Jesus looks lovingly at Martha and calmly replies.

vv. 41-42.

## II. THE INSIGHTS

-- There are many valuable insights about discipleship that we can gain from this story. Let me point out 3 of them

### A. THIS STORY HELPS US SEE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT'S URGENT AND WHAT'S IMPORTANT.

-- About 20 years ago a man named Stephen Covey wrote a bestselling book called *The Seven Habits of Highly Successful People*. One of those habits was what Covey called "Putting First Things First." In the chapter on "putting first things first" Covey makes a distinction between what is urgent and what is important. Urgent things, he says, are things that are pressing us and demanding our attention - a ringing telephone, for example. Important things, on the other hand, are things that contribute towards fulfilling your highest priorities and achieving your primary goals. Covey goes on to point out that urgent doesn't mean important, that many things that seem urgent aren't really most important. Some of the things that we think are urgent can actually be put off or even eliminated without making much of a difference in the big picture of our lives.

Indeed, some seemingly urgent things can actually be counter-productive for us because they can distract us from what is truly most important.

-- We see this clearly in Martha.

Look at v. 40a.

Luke says that Martha was "distracted," or more literally "drawn from around." In other words, Martha was surrounded by all kinds of seemingly urgent matters that were demanding and drawing her attention. She had a house full of tired and hungry men, and she was trying to fix them a meal, and she wanted it to be really special because Jesus was there. The problem was that the urgent distractions of preparing a huge meal were drawing her away from what was really important - being with Jesus, listening to His teachings about the things of God.

-- I fight the battle of the urgent and the important every morning. On the one hand, there's the important devotional time of reading the Bible and praying. On the other hand, there's the urgency of the newspaper lying outside my door. Too often, I go out and pick up the paper and start reading it first to learn more about the news, which always ends up taking away from my devotional time, which is much more important in the long run of my life.

As disciples, we need to be to be prioritizing and giving ourselves not so much to what seems urgent at the moment but to what is really most important.

### B. A SECOND DISCIPLESHIP LESSON IN THIS STORY IS TO CHOOSE NOT SIMPLY WHAT IS GOOD BUT WHAT IS BEST.

-- There's nothing essentially wrong or bad about what Martha is doing. In fact, it's good to be a thoughtful hostess - to welcome people into your home and to want to prepare a nice meal for them. But Jesus makes it clear that while fixing the meal was a good thing, it definitely wasn't the best thing.

Cf., vv. 41-42

-- In choosing to fix a meal Martha was doing something good. But in choosing to sit and listen to Jesus Mary had chosen something better - she had chosen what was best.

-- Some of the choices we make are between good and bad, but often the choices that we make are not between good and bad but between good and best. As disciples, we need to be sure that we're not settling for what is good but choosing to give ourselves to what is best - and that will always mean giving ourselves to Christ, making Him the center of our lives and making the things of God our highest priorities.

### C. A THIRD LESSON IN THIS STORY IS THAT DISCIPLES NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BEING AND DOING.

1. "Being" emphasizes who you are on the inside. "Doing" emphasizes what you accomplish on the outside, what tasks you perform. In the story Martha represents the world of our doing (what we accomplish), and Mary represents the world of our being (our inner life).

2. Here are two observations about the relationship between being and doing, between who we are and what we do, between our inner life and our external accomplishments.

a. Observation #1: You are both Mary and Martha.

You are a person, which means that you have an inner being, a heart and a soul. But you also have things that you need to do, tasks you have to accomplish. Everyone is a blend of both Martha and Mary, just in differing proportions. Some are more like Mary and some more like Martha. Some of us may be 80% Martha and 20% Mary, and some of us may be 40% Martha and 60% Mary. Both Martha and Mary are necessary for us to have a meaningful, productive and fulfilled life.

b. Observation #2: Your "Mary" must take precedence over your "Martha."

You must place higher priority on who you are inside than on what you accomplish on the outside. Your being comes before your doing because who you are on the inside determines how you live on the outside. What you do flows from who you are.

This principle of being before doing is evident in Paul's letters. Most of his letters can be divided into 2 parts: in the first part of the letter he tells us who we are, and in the second part he tells us what we are to do (how we are to live).

Look at Ephesians, for example. In the first 3 chapters Paul discusses who we are in Christ.

Eph. 1:4-5 For he [God the Father] chose us in him [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will -

Then in chapters 4-6 Paul tells us what we should do, how we should live because of who we are.

Eph. 4:1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

Eph. 5:8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light&hellip;

Our discipleship starts with who we are and then is expressed in what we do. To serve Christ rightly we must first sit at His feet

## CONCLUSION

In Experiencing God, Henry Blackaby gives this admonition:

"If you do not have clear instructions from God in a matter, pray and wait &hellip; Don't get in a hurry. He may be withholding directions to cause you to seek Him more intently. Don't try to skip over the relationship to get on with the doing. God is more interested in a love relationship with you than in what you can do for Him."

In other words, be like Mary before you act like Martha.