



No.17 - Martha - too busy!

Luke 10:38-42 and John 11:17-44

Martha is a wonderful woman who loves Jesus very much, even if she can find Him rather irritating at times. Martha was a woman bound all her life by her personality and insecurities. She lives in Bethany with her sister, Mary, and brother Lazarus. Jesus visits often and she loves to open her house to Him and His friends.

The first time her hospitality is mentioned in the Word, Jesus turns up unexpectedly with the twelve disciples and needs food and water for washing. Martha immediately starts about the job with great enthusiasm, rushing here and there. She was just as excited as her sister, to have

Jesus in their home but she felt 'she could not sit at His feet as there was work to be done'.

Have you ever heard that before?

Reputation and pleasing others.

Martha was proud that their guests were treated well, fed sumptuously, even if it is a bit over the top. She wanted her guests to be treated better than anywhere else in the neighbourhood. She was so glad that Jesus called often and obviously felt at home with them in Bethany.

As the time went on that evening, Martha watched her sister sitting at Jesus' feet taking in every word that He said. She was disappointed that her sister didn't consider Martha's need of help. As the disappointment took root, her memory went to previous times when Mary had been so focused on Jesus that she saw nothing else and Martha was left out. Martha's bitterness to her sister spilled over to Jesus. If He was a teacher why didn't He firstly recognise how over-worked she was, after all it was Him and His friends needs that she was seeing to.

From starting out with such great intentions of serving it was not long till Martha's attitude was full of annoyance, bitterness, jealousy, and self-pity as her thoughts were out of her control to every negative issue. She never considered that it was maybe her in the wrong both physically, emotionally and spiritually. How often have we gone to do something with so much enthusiasm, both at home, work and at Church, to end up being hurt and let down by others. We do not realise that we went into the activity with the wrong heart, for our own selfish motives, including, attention seeking, wanting acclamation, pride, competitiveness, and showing off our ability. We often feel that we are justified in feeling hurt about other peoples' habits or spiritual activity when we are doing so much 'for the Lord'.

Busyness and priorities.

The problem with busyness is that we become distracted, we forget the reason why we are doing things and Who we are really serving and that develops a bad attitude towards the people we are serving.

We have every intention of starting a new day with a time of worship at Jesus' feet but before we know it, we are off to work or the baby is crying etc: and we have to rush out hoping the tape we are listening to will be enough. We learn from Martha that Jesus was not satisfied with this sort of popping into and out of His presence. It did not do her any good and He wanted some undivided, undisrupted, quality time that would fill up and encourage her spirit and bring life to her whole being.

The answer we see from Mary and Martha has to be quite simply to make a decision to choose priorities on a daily basis. "...choose for yourselves this day who you will serve.....But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." **Joshua 24:15.**

Choose:-

1. A living relationship of the heart. **Matthew 6:33**
2. A time daily for undivided attention, with our Father, **Joshua 3:9; Matthew 6:6**
3. To build up your prayer time, not expecting to spend an hour straight away, **1 Corinthians 3:10-15**
4. Not to give up, this is a decision for life. **Hebrews 12:3-12; Philippians 3:14**
5. To cut out whatever gets in the way, show God you mean business. **Hebrews 12:10-14**
6. To keep a constant check on the motives for doing any form of anointed work. **Matthew 8:21-22; Philippians 2:3**
7. To ask the question 'can I afford this new activity, not financially but spiritually?', **Revelation 3:15-20**

Perfectionism: This is a kind of striving that we do in our own strength to bring ourselves or our situation to a standard that we can never really attain. This brings us into a total bondage of failure which God never wanted for us. Trying to control every situation in order to have a perfect house, children and a perfect life

will cause us to lose our joy and we will not appreciate all that God has given us. Martha was consumed with the small details of life and she nearly lost the most important thing, a living relationship with Jesus Christ. Sitting at the feet of Jesus reminds us that eternal priorities are what really matter.

We are already perfect in our spirit because of our supernatural union with Christ when we became God's child. This is unchangeable and guarantees that we will appear before the Father completely perfect, **Hebrews 10:10**. In the meantime we can grow and mature in our soul and body, making progress to becoming more and more like Jesus, but this is God's grace in us NOT our own self efforts, **Philippians 3:1-15; Ephesians 2:8-10**.

As with Martha these efforts can lead to **competitiveness** which is totally contrary to the Word of God and the life of Jesus. Every individual has got a unique part of Jesus Christ in them and so we can never be the same as anyone else, **Psalms 139:1-6; Psalm 139:13-16**. We compete because we feel insecure in Christ and do not see ourselves how God sees us. So we agree with the lies of the enemy about who we really are and we try hard to be someone we were never meant to be.

Putting any relationship or possession before our love for God means we enter into the realm of **idolatry**. We all know what God thinks about that, **1 John 5:21**! We must put our life back into order through repentance and prayer and the Word. Many of us in the Western world cannot imagine we are into idolatry as that is associated with worship of shrines and wooden images, but it really is anything that takes the first place in our lives, partners, children, houses, position, job, ministry, traditions. Think on these things; **Mark 7:8-9; Psalm 106:36**.

The Result.

As a result of the choices that Martha had made, when she came to the greatest trial of her life, the death of Lazarus, she found it far harder to worship Jesus than her sister. They both made the same exclamation but Mary "fell at His feet" (**John 11:32**) and Jesus was very moved by her tears. Mary knew how to worship Jesus. She had learnt that when in better times she had chosen to hang on His every word and take in not only His words but the amazing love that Jesus showed towards the Father and to all people. Now Martha really understood how much poorer she was because of her busyness and lack of time with Jesus as she had very little understanding of the ways of God and so what could be done at this time. She knew **about** God but did not **know** Him like her sister and so she felt she had to be at a distance. Many people turn their back on God when things go bad but that is just the time to cling close to His heart and spend as much time with Him as possible.

We all need to make the choice now, choosing private worship and the Word instead of busyness. Then we will be well prepared for all the devil wants to pour out and we will know the power and authority we have in Jesus Christ. We will also enjoy the fullness of a real Love, intimate relationship with the living God on a moment by moment basis, which is by far the best relationship in this life with fruit in the Life to come.

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1. Having read the notes about Martha, what do you think about her reaction to serving Jesus at table? Can you relate her response to any situation in your own life?
2. How would you have reacted to Mary at this time? How would you feel when Lazarus died?
3. How was Martha's practical, active personality good? How do you think she could get a balance in personality that would please Jesus?
4. Is there any situation or person in your life that you are putting ahead of your love for God, and obedience to His Word? How are you going to change things?

Read Luke 13:10-17

5. Where was the woman when she met Jesus? How long had she been disabled?
6. What were her physical symptoms? (**Luke 13:11**)
7. Describe ways in which people are bound today.
8. Describe in detail how you think her emotions felt when Jesus calls her forward.
9. Using your imagination who do you think Jesus saw when He looked at this woman?

10. What point of contact does Jesus use? What is her reaction? (**Luke 13:13**)

11. What is the reaction of the religious leaders and why? (**Luke 13:14**)

12. What does Jesus call the religious people? Is that true today? Are we all like this?(**Luke 13:15**)

13. Who does Jesus say is at the root of the ladies disability? (**Luke 13:16**)

14. What did Jesus tell the religious people was most important to Him? (**Luke 13: 15-17**)

15. What should the religious leaders have helped this lady understand, as she was a child of Abraham?
(**Deuteronomy 28:1-13**)

16. What has the story of this woman spoken to you about?

17. Sum up in one sentence what Jesus was showing in this miracle.