

Are You a Mary or a Martha?

Luke 10:41-42: (NASB) ⁴¹But the Lord answered and said to her, Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; ⁴²but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Special Guest: CQ Team Member, Abigail Ledwinka



Let's face it - the Bible really does a lot of focusing on men. Adam was created before Eve, Noah saved humanity, and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were the patriarchs of the nation of Israel. The prophets, Jesus and the apostles - all men. So, where does that leave the women of the Bible? The answer to this is actually astounding! The women of the Bible are left to quietly teach us some of the most powerful and significant lessons the Scriptures have to offer. Finding these lessons is like uncovering rare and telling archeological artifacts that vividly reveal deep biblical truths. Such are the lessons we receive from Mary and Martha, sisters of Lazarus and close friends of Jesus. Their conversations with and actions towards Jesus speak volumes, not only of their importance in HIS life, but also of their abiding place in our lives as well.

To understand the women of the Bible, we not only need to understand the culture of biblical times, but we need to hear from the perspective of a woman. We have two special guests who will relay to us the ancient culture and present-day female understanding.

Joining us today is our CQ volunteer, Julie:



I was with a group of women at a Bible conference and they asked me why Christian Questions had never done a program highlighting women in the Bible. I said, "Well, that can't be true! What about when they did a program on...hmmm." It was true! In over 20 years of broadcasting, you have never done a single program talking just about a woman. A group of us decided to do the research, and we hope to bring many more lessons from the women in the Scriptures, because they have profound meaning for both men and women today.

The first important point about these two sisters is found in a detail of the theme text:

<u>Luke 10:41-42</u>: (NASB) ⁴¹But the Lord answered and said to her, Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; ⁴²but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Jesus says Martha's name twice. What is the significance of Jesus repeating Martha's name?





Why repeat the name? Is it a common biblical practice? No! This is only done ten times in the entire Bible:

- 1. Abraham, Abraham (Genesis 22:11)
- 2. Jacob, Jacob (Genesis 46:2)
- 3. Moses, Moses (Exodus 3:4)
- 4. Samuel, Samuel (1 Samuel 3:10)
- 5. Martha, Martha (Luke 10:41)
- 6. Simon, Simon (Luke 22:31)
- 7. Saul, Saul (Acts 9:4)
- 8. Lord, Lord (Matthew 7:21,22, 25:11; Luke 6:46; 13:25)
- 9. Eloi, Eloi (Mark 15:34; Matthew 27:46; Psalm 22:1)
- 10. Jerusalem, Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37; Luke 13:34)

Abraham, Abraham - this was when God stopped Abraham from sacrificing Isaac, because the comparison picture had been made of God sacrificing His son, Jesus. It did not need to go any further in the literal picture.

Moses, Moses - this was when God spoke to Moses through a burning bush, which only happened once in the history of the world.

And Saul, Saul - was Jesus calling out the conscience of who would soon become the great Apostle Paul. These are momentous events! It even includes Jesus himself, on the cross, calling out to our Heavenly Father. Of all the thousands of named people in the Bible, Martha makes the top 10! Notice she is the only woman on that list. This is like a giant arrow pointing at it, flashing, "Read me! Something is important here!"

When a name was spoken twice, it was to really get someone's attention (and ours), to make a special point or as a Hebrew expression of intimacy. When Jesus says the name twice to Martha, Simon Peter, Saul, and Jerusalem, they are Jesus' words of deep concern to those whom he deeply loved.

What can we learn from Martha being one of these ten occurrences?

Abby, welcome to Christian Questions. Abigail was one of the women who inspired this podcast. Abby, when we first talked about doing some podcasts about women in the Bible, you were excited to research Abigail. Why did you change your mind and focus your studies on the stories of Mary and Martha?

The story of Mary and Martha is actually one that I have wondered about for a long time, probably as far back as to when I was a teenager. My mom and I always wondered if there was more to it. Martha always seemed to be looked down upon as the sister who did not have her priorities straight and was the one "you shouldn't be like." My mom and I both thought there had to be more



to Martha than just that one incident of her asking Jesus to tell Mary to help her. Martha is a hero of faith to me now.

It seems Mary is the one who always gets the focus.

We will work with Julie and Abby throughout this podcast to uncover the gems about Mary and Martha, who are wonderful examples to us.



Mary and Martha occupied significant space in the very heart of Jesus.

How often do Mary and Martha appear in Scripture? What do their lives teach us about them and ourselves?

To begin looking at the women of the Bible, highlighting these two sisters will set an important scriptural foundation for us. When Jesus pays close attention to anyone or anything, we as Christians should not only take notice, but immediately follow his example. Now we need to try and see what he saw.

Martha and Mary Appear in Three Stories:

- 1. Martha serving LUKE 10:38-42
- 2. Raising of Lazarus JOHN 11
- 3. Martha serves again. Mary anoints Jesus' feet JOHN 12:1-8

1. Martha serving LUKE 10:38-42

<u>Luke 10:38-42</u>: (NASB) ³⁸Now as they were traveling along, he entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to his word. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to him and said, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me. ⁴¹But the Lord answered and said to her, Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; ⁴²but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

(1) Mary and Martha 1, Moments with the Savior by Ken Gire

• Laying his head to rest in a home is a rare treat for Jesus. Especially a home such as this - a home where he is recognized as Lord; a home where he is loved. Martha, the older sister and owner of the house, is first to answer. Her excitement echoes throughout the house, "Mary! Mary! Come quick! It's Jesus!" Mary darts to the door to greet him. Immediately they tend to his needs. Martha brings him a fresh drink of fresh water. Martha, so eager to serve. Energetic. First to roll up her sleeves and pitch in to help. Last to leave until every dish is cleaned and put away. Up early. And Mary? Well, she's up about 30 minutes later. Likes to cook but doesn't like to clean up the mess. Perceptive. Asks few but thoughtful questions. Is a good listener.



Sensitive and calm. While Mary takes Jesus' sandals and washes his weary feet, Martha busies herself in the kitchen. Both are intently listening to him speak about the disciples. As Mary finishes her duty, she lays aside the basin of water and the washrag. She resumes sitting as his feet. The three times

you see Mary in the Scriptures, that is where she is, at the Savior's feet. Her physical posture represents the posture of her heart. Humble, reverent, teachable. All the qualities of a good disciple. And there she sits, drinking in every word that pours so sweetly from his lips. But torn between conversation and her many preparations,



Martha's attention is drawn to the kitchen. Here she readies her feast. Nothing like a hot meal for a weary traveler. And nothing but the best for Jesus.

Jesus visits Martha's home three times, which tells us he feels comfortable, loved and welcome with this family. Abby, tell us a little about the cultural setting at this point in time for women.

Culturally, women were expected to take a more domesticated role. I believe this is why Martha is so focused on preparing the meal and home while Jesus was there. The normal duties of women in Jesus' time were pretty restrictive. Women had some freedom while in their homes, but they had little to no authority and were considered inferior to men.

What was the quote you found from Rabbi Eliezer in the 1st century BC at the time when Jesus lived?

It is pretty harsh. He said, "Rather should the words of the Torah be burned than entrusted to a woman...Whoever teaches his daughter the Torah is like one who teaches her obscenity." I had heard some sects of Judaism were like this before but was really surprised of such an intense perspective on women being taught the Torah.

I had the blessing of going to Israel and we visited an Orthodox Jewish synagogue. To this day, the women are separated during services. The men do not even see them.

Men and women's roles were very specific back then. Do you think it would have been scandalous for Mary to be where she was to be taught by Jesus?

I think it would have been looked down upon. Jesus was referred to as Rabbi, so if a rabbi was teaching in front of a group, and there was a woman sitting at his feet, I'm sure people questioned it. Mary was testing some major social norms.



Jesus never reacted like most people of his time. He invited in the sinners, tax collectors, lepers and those looked down upon. Perhaps that empowered Mary to trust Jesus.

Because Jesus came to their house three times, there had to be an intimacy with this family. Mary was comfortable with him.

Jesus was very inclusive of who he asked to follow him, and it did not exclude women. He never turned women or children away.

Mary and Martha 2, Moments with the Savior by Ken Gire

As she works the dough, she thinks of everything else that needs to be done. All she hears now is the sound of the voices, not the words. And the sound grates against her. I can't believe Mary isn't in here helping, she thinks. Martha puts a fist into the dough. She should be in here. Another fist into the dough. We could get this done in half the time. She pulls and mashes, pulls and mashes, while she mumbles. You know, I'd like to hear what he has to say too, but somebody's got to fix dinner. Martha reaches for some flour and throws it in the lump. They could at least come in here



while they talk. She works the flour into the expanding loaf of dough. I can't believe he just lets her sit there. Another fist into the dough. Here I am in the kitchen, sweating, working my fingers to the bone. Doesn't he care? Finally, she's had enough. Martha throws down the dough and stomps into the living room. "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" Martha is hot. She doesn't address Mary directly. She's too mad. She doesn't even call her by name. She refers to her as "my sister." "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." He brings his point gently home; fellowship with him is a matter of priorities. And a matter of choice. It's the better part of the meal life has to offer. It is, in fact, the main course. And what did Mary do? All she did was sit. It is where she sat that made the difference.

You can feel the frustration. It's interesting that Martha did not go to Mary privately; she went directly to Jesus. Does anything strike you as odd about that? She went to her guest to handle the family dispute.

I agree. It was probably one of those awkward moments. Jesus does not react in a negative way. Martha was probably comfortable enough to ask Jesus to correct her sister.



I was wondering if she went to Jesus to try and embarrass Mary. She didn't even call Mary by name - she said, "my sister." Martha was probably assuming Jesus would tell Mary to go help her sister. I also find it interesting that Mary does not say anything. Mary does not defend herself; Jesus defends her. Mary is comfortable she is doing the right thing, so she lets Jesus speak for her.

Martha could have been at her wits' end preparing last minute for all these people that showed up at her house. There was Jesus, twelve disciples and probably a crowd following them. She did not have the modern conveniences that we do. I would be overwhelmed and at my boiling point if I thought I wasn't getting the help that I thought I needed or deserved.

She was somewhat justified in her frustration.



Becca: As average sinful people, I think it's really easy to see Martha is coming from the perspective that she is doing work to serve Jesus (which we know is good and with good intention) and her sister not only isn't helping, but Jesus isn't telling her to help. Making these assumptions and judgments about others and becoming angry with them is not right, and we must beware of these thoughts and feelings within ourselves. Satan and his influence can creep in at any time and we may not even recognize it because it's SO justifiable and therefore we need to always be on guard.

Becca made the connection that this was a temptation for her. She had her service and it was good to feed Jesus and the others that were there. Yet, she was busy looking and seeing what someone else was doing. We will get into specific lessons for us in today's world, but what are your takeaways from this first story?

I love how Jesus answers and teaches with such gentleness. He responded with grace and love and did not want to squash Martha or Mary's potential. I also learned we need to be careful not to let our faith become all about performance. Performance in the sense that we want to just serve, and we forget to listen and take in what the Word and God are trying to tell us.

Both Mary and Martha loved, respected and deeply desired to serve Jesus.

In spite of her absolute attachment to Jesus, Martha needed correction. What is the lesson for us?

It might be easy to look at Martha from where we sit and observe how she missed an opportunity, and then think how we would never do that. Really? We, like Martha, need to take a breath and think through the lessons presented here. I believe these lessons changed Martha, and therefore they can also change us. We cannot learn a lesson unless we observe it and make it real for us.

Martha was legitimately under stress. Everyone's comfort rested on her shoulders. There was justifiable frustration. Jesus teaches us what to do with that frustration.



Four Soul Searching Lessons:



I heard a phrase recently from a historical lecture I attended - "Photos don't lie but photographers can be liars." A snapshot in time never tells the full story of what happened immediately before and after. We need to be careful when looking at the lives of others and what they have or do not have. Everyone has a story and God works with every story. Comparisons can lead us down the wrong road.

<u>2 Corinthians 9:8</u>: (NIV) And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

<u>Hebrews 13:5</u>: (NIV) Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.

Abby said, "There's more to hospitality than everything looking perfect." Hospitality should set the tone for fellowship. Fellowship was more important here than making sure there was fresh bread.

When we compare our spiritual gifts God has given to us and we complain that we wish we had someone else's gift, then we are not going to be ministering to those we need to minister to.





How would you act if you knew you had only so many days to live and your family was around you, worrying about how clean the living room was or if there would be enough potatoes for everyone? You would want them to reprioritize and just listen to the final words you had for them, knowing things were about to get really crazy. Jesus was saying, "I'm here now, but soon I will not be."

Don't let the URGENT take the place of the IMPORTANT in your life. Oh, the URGENT will really fight, claw and scream for attention. It will plead for our time and even make us think we've done the right thing by calming its nerves. But the tragedy of it all is this: While you and I were putting out the fires of the URGENT (an everyday affair), the IMPORTANT was again left in a holding pattern. And interestingly, the IMPORTANT is neither noisy nor demanding. Unlike the URGENT, it patiently and quietly waits for us to realize its significance. — Charles Hummel (In his book, Tyranny of the Urgent)

This is a profound paragraph about the urgent versus the important. This is one of the reasons so many marriages fail. The urgent things of life overshadow the important things regarding our spouse.

I never thought about it in the marital setting, but you're right. We have a lot of distractions around us today - more so than any time in history - how do we stay focused on the eternal, the "good part" Jesus referred to?

Jonathan's personal response: 1. We need to fill ourselves spiritually, starting first with our personal prayer life with our Heavenly Father. 2. We are admonished not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. This simply means, go to our Bible studies as often as we are able. Our Bible study class meets on Sundays and Wednesdays and whenever I miss one, I feel it. 3. If you are single and looking for a spouse, marry "only in the Lord" so you can encourage each other's spiritual growth. 4. If possible, incorporate some of your vacation time with Bible conferences or prepare reading materials to bring while vacationing to help stay spiritually focused.

Technology can be very distracting. I can get distracted often by being on my phone, when instead, I could be more present with my husband. Maybe a good way to remember is to spend time reading the Bible, and to think, "What does God want to tell me today?"





<u>Luke 10:39-41</u> - Many translations, including the King James, American Standard and Young's Literal Translation open the story with "Mary was ALSO at Jesus' feet." That implied Martha was sitting and listening, too. But in verse 40, it says, "Martha was CUMBERED (NASB says distracted) about much serving..."

KJV Cumbered/NASB Distracted: Strongs #4049 *perispao*, to drag all around; figuratively to distract with care

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: To draw away, distract, be over-occupied, TOO busy about a thing

Greek: Peri means "about," "around," "near;" Spao means "to draw" (like one's sword)

With a sword, you are literally looking only at what is in front of you.

This is the *only* time this word is used in the Bible.

Think about today. We are over-occupied. We are in the middle of a busy holiday season and need to keep our priorities straight. We can't get bogged down by the stress and be over-occupied and too busy with things that are not spiritual.

Perispao is where the word periscope originates: to locate something very specific and important. Jesus was telling Martha to focus on the most important thing.

<u>Luke 10:41</u>: (NASB) But the Lord answered and said to her, Martha, Martha, you are worried <3309> and bothered <5182> about so many things.

Worried: Strongs #3309 *merimnao* - to be anxious about Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: To be anxious, to be troubled with cares

Bothered: Strongs #5182 *turbazo*, to make "turbid" that is disturb, trouble Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: disturb, trouble, to be troubled in mind, disquieted

Turbid means "confused or obscure in meaning or effect," and "cloudy, opaque or thick with suspended matter" ("turbid" water means murky). We are stuck just like Martha was with all of our obligations. We need to get above the turbid waters to see clearly and not be overly anxious and concerned.

<u>Matthew 6:34</u>: (NASB) So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Philippians 4:6: (ASV) In nothing be anxious.

Anxiety drowns out God's voice and clouds the promises He has given us in the Scriptures. We must be able to see through the chaos to the most important thing.





Soul Searching Lesson Four:

We severely limit our blessing while doing something for the Lord by grumbling or complaining about not getting help from others by our self-serving thoughts.

Feeling our work is more difficult actually takes our focus away from our privilege.

<u>1 Peter 4:9</u>: (NASB) Be hospitable to one another without complaint.

Jonathan, you are in a situation of being hospitable without complaint that is very difficult and unique. Your mom and dad are living with you and your wife. Share with us some of the challenges and the blessings.



My parents are both 89-years-old and my father has moderate-severe Alzheimer's Disease. My mom had some depression from where they were living, and they needed help. We stepped in and said, "Come live with us and we will take care of you the best we can." Rick, to not complain means you are perfect, right? Jewel and I both cannot say we don't complain but we are working on it. Obviously, the Lord has lessons for us to learn about helping others and focusing on others more than ourselves. We may not have freedom to come and go, but we are doing what we need to do and are thankful for the privilege.

Do it with the attitude of clarity that "This is my way to serve God, even if it is not my ideal way."



Martha's need for perspective brings insight and value to our own need for perspective.

Jesus showed her the way – he will show us as well.



Did all those lessons from Martha's preoccupation challenges increase her faith or discourage her?

Sometimes we do not think of those who lived alongside of Jesus as having the same vulnerabilities and challenges we do. We always make exceptions for the Apostle Peter, but what about Martha? Jesus' corrective words to her must have been hard to hear. Let's see how she grew into an example of faithfulness.

"I Need a Silent Night" (Verse one) Amy Grant

I've made the same mistake before
Too many malls, too many stores
December traffic, Christmas rush
It breaks me till I push and shove
Children are crying while mothers are trying
To photograph Santa and sleigh
The shopping and buying and standing forever in line
What can I say?
I need a silent night, a holy night
To hear an angel voice through the chaos and the noise
I need a midnight clear, a little peace right here
To end this crazy day with a silent night

2. Raising of Lazarus JOHN 11

We first see Jesus allowing the sin and sickness of the world to take its course, so the glory of God will be unmistakable:

John 11:1,3-6: (KJV) ¹Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany... ³Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. ⁴When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. ⁵Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. ⁶When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

This would seem counterintuitive. Here it says he loves them, and yet he purposely stayed away, and we will talk more about that. What struck me is in verse 5: Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. Lazarus, as the man, is not the first one mentioned as whom he loves - it is Martha! In all of the New Testament, this is the only place it says Jesus loved someone of a specific name. There is a disciple Jesus loves and people think that references John, but it also could be Lazarus and there are other theories. That disciple is never named. Jesus loved Martha. Isn't that amazing? Mary is mentioned only as her sister.

Jesus' emotional connection with this family was palpable, yet he stayed away for the sake of God's glory:

John 11:7,12,14-15: (KJV) ⁷Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again... ¹¹Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. ¹²Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well... ¹⁴Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless, let us go unto him.



Jesus let the death happen on purpose because God's glory is bigger than what they thought.

The death of Lazarus was widely mourned. Here we again see the differences between Martha and Mary - notice Martha's first words to Jesus: John 11:17, 19-21: (KJV) ¹⁷Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already... ¹⁹And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. ²⁰Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house. ²¹Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

Let's look again where everybody is. I envision Martha as the stronger of the two sisters and able to handle more. They both obviously hear that Jesus is coming, but Martha is able to get up, get out and meet him and talk to him. Mary is so overcome in her grief that it seems as though she is not even able to move or put one foot in front of the other at this point. The experience is too new. Abby and I were talking and trying to put ourselves in the shoes of these sisters, when you knew he had the power and yet did nothing with it.

Abby, how would you have felt?

I am very close with my brother and would be devastated. I don't think I would ever have responded in the way Martha does later. I would have been mad, like, "You could've gotten here in time to save him - why didn't you?" Her response was completely relatable.

He had done other raisings, other resuscitations of people who had been dead for varying amounts of time but never four days. They might have thought, "If he were dead ten minutes, he could still do this," but four days meant the body was already decomposing. At this point, they see no hope. There is nothing that can be done. Lazarus is gone, and Jesus could have prevented it.

Now notice Martha's deep and profound faith that truly accepts the glory of Jesus' Messiahship:

John 11:22-27: (KJV) ²²But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. ²³Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. ²⁴Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. ²⁵Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: ²⁶And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? ²⁷She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

This response struck me, because it was obvious she had belief in the prophecies. Hebrew 11:19 talks about Abraham believing in a resurrection. She also believed in a resurrection. The resurrection did not really feel that real to me until recently when my husband and I experienced a miscarriage. Our grief was rough and is not completely over.





We wanted to get through it fast, but that's not healthy, nor possible. So, I was really touched by this story of Martha believing that her loved one would be resurrected - it was real to her - and she knew Jesus could do it. It was not until I experienced this difficult loss that I could really relate to being excited to have our child resurrected. The kingdom is much more real to me now.

Jesus lets Martha's faith come out. He gently provokes it and she responds. As a result, he is able to relay great truth about himself and God's glory. She is engaging and is present with him. This is part of the heroism of Martha.

<u>John 11:28</u>: (KJV) And when she had so said, she went her way and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The master is come, and calleth for thee.

Martha has been rejuvenated. She talked to Jesus and he has given her hope. Notice he did not say, "Oh, I will raise him now. You will be happy in a few minutes." He does not even hint at this. He lets her faith show itself. Her next instinct is to go get her sister.

Now we look into the heartbreak of Mary:

John 11:29, 32-35: (KJV) ²⁹As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly... ³²Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. ³³When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, ³⁴And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. ³⁵Jesus wept.

Interestingly, when Mary comes out of the house, she says the exact same thing: Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died, and fell to his feet. But she is not recorded of having any affirmation of faith or any revelation from Jesus like Martha.

Again, Martha is probably the stronger, maybe less emotional of the two. She needed the "strong" Jesus who would give



information - who would lovingly but firmly reassure her, to draw out her faith and build on it. This is how she would get the peace that this would not be the last time she saw Lazarus. Mary needed the compassionate side, the groaning side, the one who would sit and cry with her and just go through the tough experience with her. Jesus could have said, "Stop crying, Mary - it's okay - I'm about to raise him." But he DIDN'T. He let her mourn and let himself feel that mourning for all of them. Like Abby just said, it is not an experience one can get over quickly. We have to go through it. Jesus went through this human situation that would be doomed to repeat itself over and over again at every funeral throughout every generation. Jesus was feeling what we feel.

This is a good lesson. When we try to comfort others, helping people is not one size fits all.



If you have ever heard the song, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," we need to remember that he cries with us when we go through our hard times and struggles. He doesn't expect us to just snap out of whatever emotions we might be feeling. He responds to Martha in the way that fits her. He met her where she was at but also met Mary where she was, who needed that mutual mourning and grief.

Neither one was wrong where they were, they were just different. Jesus could see the difference and could fill the difference in each one as needed. The shortest text in the Bible is *Jesus wept* in <u>John 11:35</u>. This encapsulates that he entered into the grief of those around him. He owned the grief with them. This is part of his drawing Mary out and giving her comfort. To her, the words would not have been comfort. The weeping with her was the comfort.

After this came the drama of raising their brother, which was beyond what they could have begun to have expected.



Both Mary and Martha were given exactly what they needed from Jesus <u>before</u> the raising of their brother from the dead.

Their experience shows us that Jesus knows us.

Martha has shown wonderful faith and growth. Did Mary's experience produce the similar results?

By now it is obvious how important these sisters are to us. They define the different ways we each relate to Jesus and the power with which Jesus can relate to us as we need him to. They really let us know that following Jesus is not a cookie cutter walk; rather, it is a personal path we traverse alongside others

3. Martha serves again. Mary anoints Jesus' feet JOHN 12:1-8

This event was at the close of Jesus' earthly ministry. He opened it three-and-a-half years previous at a wedding by turning water into wine to symbolize the joy of the gospel he would carry. He closed it with a touching anointing to prepare him for death, he being the necessary sacrifice required to fully deliver the joy of the gospel.

Women were at the opening and closing of his ministry. His first miracle was provoked by his mother. This last event was provoked by Martha and Mary.

Let's observe how each of the sisters has grown in their spiritual maturity, and each continues in what they are gifted to do - this time all with focus and fellowship in the forefront of their minds.

Martha serves the physical needs with humility:

<u>John 12:1-8</u>: (NASB) ¹Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ²So they made him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with him.



Everyone has grown to show their true colors. They are stable in who they are. Martha was serving, but this time with grace, humility and joy. She is no longer overwrought. Her service opened the door for Mary to have time to do the anointing. Lazarus was fellowshipping.

Because of Martha, Mary is allowed to do this act. This is where the beauty of the relationship of these sisters comes in. They are kind of yin and yang opposites, but together they are serving Jesus, right where they belong. Martha's service was to nourish Jesus. He would need this because things would be tough coming up. Her gift was to serve. Martha in this case is a hero because she allowed Mary to perform Mary's service.



We have had the privilege of doing this podcast (formerly a radio program) for over 20 years. Every week we have been able to talk about the gospel and bring the Good News to whoever will listen. How does that happen? For me, this is a lot of work to put a podcast together, week after week. It is a huge challenge, and I could not do it without my wife, Tricia. She is not the voice behind the microphone, but she is the power behind the voice behind the microphone. She paves the road for me every single day. She makes my life to where I don't have to worry about a lot of the extraneous things that have to be dealt with. She takes care of things, she makes sure I have the time and space to do the preparations I need...every single day. This isn't just once in a while; this is all the time. So, when I think of Martha serving with this beaming privilege, I think of my own wife. She gives me the ability to do what I do. God has given me the ability to communicate and an incredible venue to work with all the other Christian Questions volunteers. But I could not do it one day without my own "Martha." I get the value of the hero behind the scenes.

Mary serves the spiritual needs with humility:

³Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

This is a profound experience, but both sisters are engaged in necessary service each are capable of doing, and both are equally blessed.

Abby talked before about what life for women was like in that culture and wiping his feet with her hair



might have been scandalous for the day. This is a very intimate act. But what an act of humility! She could have just grabbed a towel, but she used her hair to wipe dusty feet.

It shows her humility. Mary is the one who did not have the strength to get up and go see Jesus when her brother died. She was so overwrought she could not manage. Now she is stepping out in an even more bold way. This goes further than just sitting at the feet of Jesus. This is actively engaging in a way that is



deep and attached. She was not worried, because it was Jesus. He had proven himself to understand the heart of everyone who crossed his path.

The Scriptures we are reading in <u>John 12</u> explain who everyone is. Martha serves with gladness. Lazarus is fellowshipping, connected to his Lord. Mary is being sacrificial, humble and serving in a different way. Someone else's true colors come through...

The sad character of Judas is revealed:

⁴But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, who was intending to betray him, said, ⁵Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people? ⁶Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.



A full-time minimum wage worker in the United States makes roughly \$15,000. Not to side with Judas, but that is a lot of money to use in a single sitting. That money really COULD have gone to feed a LOT of poor people. How is it she was able to spend \$15,000 on perfume?

Jesus was going to die. This was the Savior of the world; whose mission was about to be accomplished days from now. This served to take care of what they wouldn't have time to do to properly and bury him later with the same detail. Jesus saw this as God's overruling to honor his sacrifice through the humility and service of that woman who was willing to sit and wipe his feet with her hair. Further, Judas was not interested in the poor; he used them as an excuse. It was a lot of money no one would miss pieces of along the way if he could just get his hands on it. True colors!

Jesus prepared those who would follow him to be able to cope. The one who decided not to follow him, Judas, was the one who could not be settled.

The wise humility and respect of Jesus:

⁷Therefore Jesus said, Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.

Matthew adds this:

<u>Matthew 26:12-13</u>: (NASB) ¹²For when she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. ¹³Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her.



This is the second time Mary does not jump to defend her actions. Jesus again does it for her, because she is content in the knowledge that her heart is doing the right thing with the right motives.

It is interesting that Mary was able to pick up on the fact that Jesus' time was short, and he would soon die. In <u>Luke 9:46</u> and <u>Luke 22:24</u>, the men were spending a lot of time arguing over who would be the greatest among them. In many cases, women are more intuitive, so we have an advantage when it comes to absorbing the gospel message and really understanding the love it took for God to sacrifice His son on our behalf.

Abby talked about the love for her brother, Tim, so we asked if he would sing us one of his favorite Bible camp songs:



"She Hath Done What She Could," Tim Weeks

What is this fragrance sweet flowing through the crowded room
It is Mary with my dear Master
She's anointing his head with perfume.
The memory of her sweet sacrifice lingers on like a perfume rare
A memorial of her unselfish love
She hath done what she could for him there.



Both Mary and Martha grew from being true friends of Jesus into becoming true friends who were well equipped to serve and honor and bless him without reservation.



The first time we meet Mary and Martha, their story is described in less than 100 words. And yet, it led us, Abby and I, to a discovery of lessons on top of lessons that are relevant to us today. What do the other women in the Bible have to teach us? Watch for future programs on our inspiring sisters!

I think this whole story goes to show that God sees more in us than the learning curve of what we think we are capable of. He knows we are capable of more. As followers of Christ, we are called to much more than we ever thought we could do.

Martha and Mary are heroes, to both men and women. They show us how to be faithful, how to stand up and stand for Jesus in a way that is utterly inspiring.

Are you a Martha or a Mary? Even the men should be asking how to best serve our Lord and Master.

So, are you a Mary or a Martha?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!



Join us next week for our podcast on December 3, 2018: Ep. #1050: "What Does it Mean to be Saved?"

A woman is the full circle. Within her is the power to create, nurture and transform.

— Diane Mariechild



