

Mary & Martha

The story of Mary and Martha is in Luke 10, about the two sisters from Bethany, near Jerusalem. They were the sisters of Lazarus, who Jesus raised from the dead and close friends of Jesus. They opened their home for Jesus and all His disciples and provided hospitality for them when they were visiting Jerusalem. Most Bible scholars suggest they were a similar age to Jesus. It is likely Martha was the older sister. What is prominent in the story is the difference in behaviour when Jesus visits their home. God uses the story of the two women to illustrate the kind of relationship Jesus wants to have with us. Both women were believers but had different personalities, reactions and perspectives of what was important in life.



Jesus was saying, Martha, it is not just the preparations for My visit you are anxious about, it is more, it is in fact many things in life. Martha's concerns were over earthly matters, while her sister Mary was focused on spiritual things, such as spending time with Jesus. After all, Jesus was more than capable of feeding 4,000 (Matthew 15:32-39) and the 5,000 (Matthew 14:14-21).

Mary and Martha in the Church Today

Many of us can become like Martha in our Christian walk, others are more like Mary. It is easy to allow a busy life to distract us

from spending time with Jesus. Mary and Martha both represent many professing Christians in church today. The point of the story is making sure Jesus and His word is priority in our life. We become closer to Jesus through our prayer life, fellowship with others in the church and Bible study, not through our own works and efforts.

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. 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!"
(Luke 10:38-40)

Martha complains about Mary

Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus to listen and spend time with Him. Meanwhile, Martha was distracted with all the preparations for His visit. Martha was frustrated, her sister had left her with all the work to do. Jesus was speaking with those who were content to listen. Everyone was settled, when Martha decides to interrupt. She does not ask Mary to help her, instead she asks Jesus to tell Mary to help her. In other words Jesus do you realise you are distracting Mary from her chores, and I am the only one doing all the work around here!

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:41-42)

What Was Driving Martha?

'Martha was distracted'(v40). Martha allowed things to get in the way of what was important in life, spending time with Jesus! Martha had complained to Jesus about Mary. According to Jesus, Mary done the right thing by giving Him all her attention. The Lord did not tell Martha how grateful He was for all her hard work, instead He told her nothing was going to distract Mary from what was more important. Jesus then gently touches on the root of Martha's problem, "you are worried and upset about many things." Jesus was exposing her ANXIETY!

Both Sisters Reaction to the Death of Lazarus'

Both women had different reactions to the news that Jesus was coming after Lazarus' death. Understandably, they were both disappointed and upset that Jesus had not arrived before he died. Martha rushed out to meet Jesus when He arrived, but Mary waited at home. Mary approached Jesus, "if you had only come sooner, he wouldn't have died". In other words Jesus, where were you when we needed you? She ran back to get Mary. Jesus must have asked where Mary was, when Martha returned, she said "The Master is come and is asking for you (John 11: 28). John tells us Mary did eventually go to Jesus, as she fell at his feet weeping. Jesus was deeply moved by her grief. Jesus went to the tomb of Lazarus and raised Him from the dead (John 11:39).

When Christians Get Distracted

Martha was distracted by her works and many worries. It is important in our Christian life to be on guard against distractions, as they hinder our relationship with Jesus. The enemy brings subtle schemes to keep us distracted, even Christian duties in the church. Serving others and doing good works should stem from having Christ at the centre of our life. Serving is a good thing, as Jesus came to serve, but it is more important to spend time with Him first. If not, we become easily discouraged and like Martha, frustrated.

Like Martha, are you worried and anxious over things in life? Anxiety is a heavy burden which God does not want us to carry. It weights a person down and can dominate our life if not dealt with (Proverbs 12:25).

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6)