

Women of the New Testament – Lesson 7: Mary and Martha

Matthew 7:7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

Did we learn our lesson? Study Questions from Lesson 6 (Herodias)

1. According to Mark 6:17-18, where was John the Baptist?
Answer: Bound in prison.
2. According to Mark 6:17-18, Why was John the Baptist there?
Answer: For publicly denouncing the marriage of Herod and Herodias (unlawful).
3. According to Mark 6:19, what was Herodias's goal for John the Baptist?
Answer: To kill him.
4. According to Mark 6:20, how did Herod feel about John the Baptist?
Answer: Feared and respected him (observed him, heard him gladly).
5. Complete the following scripture:
Matthew 15:19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own

True / False

- False** Herod married his brother's daughter (MAR 6:18 – Married his brother's wife)
True John openly rejected Herod/Herodias marriage (MAR 6:18)
False Herodias admired John's courage to speak the truth (MAR 6:19 – A quarrel against him)
False The sister of Herodias danced before Herod (MAR 6:22 – Daughter of Herodias)

Extra Credit - In your opinion, do you share any traits with Herodias, and if so, what?

Lesson 7: Mary and Martha

'Siblings: Children of the same parents, each of whom is perfectly normal until they get together' – Sam Levenson (1911 - 1980) American humorist

Anyone who has brothers and/or sisters knows this is one of the most complex relationships in existence. For as long as I can remember, I have loved my younger sister, and yet she annoyed me to no end. I truly believe she was created just to contradict everything I said or did. It amazes me that we can be so different.

Oddly I discovered I am not alone – It is actually very common, if not the norm, for siblings to share many character traits, and yet somehow be opposite. My own two sons are in many ways in contrast, with one being reserved and methodical (look before you leap), and the other very outspoken and almost chaotic (shoot first and ask questions later). This brings to mind:

- **Jeremiah 1:5** Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee.
Regardless of our worldly origins, God knows each of us individually, and we are all unique.
- **Jeremiah 17:9** The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?
Regardless of what you think you know of someone. Only God truly knows (even our siblings)

In this lesson we will look at Mary and Martha, sisters who have very different personalities.

The Family

Before examining their personalities, let's take a look at their background to get perspective of their home life environment and some of the factors that influence their characteristics:

John 11:18-19 – A close family

(18) Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off:

(19) And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

As far as we know, the family consisted of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, all siblings. There is no mention in any text of their parents, which indicate they are the adult children whose parents are either absent (journeying as merchants) or they may be deceased (which is most likely), and they are maintaining the inheritance of the household as it is theirs (**NUM 36:8** – Enjoy the inheritance of their fathers). There is no way to determine their age, but because of their relationship with Jesus, it is a reasonable assumption they are of the same generation (probably between 25 and 35 years old).

We can also assume none of them are married, as most often, single children remain with their parents, and only leave when they are to come under the household of a husband (since it is just the three, it is unlikely Lazarus has a wife, as she would have been included in his mourning). Also there is no mention of any of them having children,

One, if not all are either employed or have financial security, as they are able to sustain their household and there is no mention of them being in a position of asking for anything of anyone (not begging).

Their home is in Bethany, a small town near Jerusalem (about 15 furlongs = 1.9 miles) and was a community known for its care of the sick. This would align with the three of them being very sympathetic to those in pain and suffering, and the public display of support in the loss of their brother,

Mary and Martha compared

Luke 10:38-40 – A different approach to life

(38) Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

(39) And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

(40) But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

Martha – Several key traits revealed:

1. Hospitable (receiving the Lord into her home), caring for the needs of others, putting them first

Hebrews 13:2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

2. Focused on the needs of the physical world - A mindset of servitude that can lead to conflict. Martha, most likely the oldest, is accustomed to accepting the responsibilities of managing the household, and this routine drives her attention and efforts

Matthew 13:22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

The Lord instructs that, even with good intentions, if one's fixation is to attending to the needs of the world, there will be little to no intentness to the spiritual needs. One can become ineffective as a believer (you will not have a spiritual testimony), and you will either not make time to witness, or you will not be viewed as a 'credible' witness, as your life is worldly.

Matthew 6: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The danger is in where one defines their priorities: If your ambitions are centered on the world instead of spiritual, that will be the focus of your efforts (**LUK 16:13** – **Ye cannot serve God and mammon**).

Luke 10:41 – The Lord summarizes

(41) And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things.

The Lord gently reveals to Martha her concerns are focused on the wrong needs (worldly), which cause considerable and unnecessary anxiety. The world is never satisfied.

Mary – A different perspective

1. Intuitively attentive – We immediately see Mary hanging on every word of the Lord, sitting at His feet, allowing her spiritual nature to grow

Matthew 6:33 – Priorities

(33) But seek ye first the kingdom of God.

Mary is not dismissive of the household, but understands the unique opportunity before her and has chosen to tend to the needs of the spirit which is an investment in eternity.

Matthew 18:3 – Humble and trusting

(3) And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Mary surrenders all her attention as a child – Complete trust, no pride, submitting all of her spirituality to the Lord (unassuming, unbiased, and in complete submission).

Luke 10:42 – The Lord summarizes

(42) But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

The Lord reveals that Mary had discovered what is important, and He will not allow that to be taken away. (see **MARK 14:5-9 / JOHN 12:3-8** – The Lord's memorial of Mary's love: Anointing the Lord)

The contrast between the two does not make one better or worse (**JOHN 11:20** - Martha rushes to the Lord as Mary does not), but illustrates we are all different - even between believers, with different skills and gifts:

1 Corinthians 12:27-28 – Diversified

(27) Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

(28) And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

We are all different for a reason, as the earthly ministry requires a diverse skillset and collection of personalities to be able to reach a diverse world.

John 11: 5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.

Jesus loved each in spite of their flaws because they loved Him, and the Lord loves each believer as His child (**GAL 3:26** For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus), The hope is that, while in this world, we can put our 'Martha' aside (the cares of the world), and let our inner 'Mary' out to recognize what is important, and the Lord is faithful to ensure it is not taken away.

Next Lesson: The Samaritan Woman

Women of the New Testament – Lesson 7: Mary Martha

Study Questions

1. According to John 11:18-19, in what town does Martha, Mary and Lazarus live?

2. According to Luke 10:38, who received Jesus into the house?

3. According to Luke 10:40, what was Martha doing while Jesus visited?

4. According to Luke 10:39, what was Mary doing as Jesus visited?

5. Complete the following scripture:

Matthew 7:7 Ask, and it shall be _____ you; seek, and ye shall _____;
knock, and it shall be _____ unto you.

True / False

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| T | F | The cares of this world will improve witnessing |
| T | F | The believer should trust in the Lord as a child |
| T | F | Jesus instructed Mary to help Martha |
| T | F | All believers should try to be alike |

Reference

EXTRA CREDIT – In your opinion, are you more like Martha or Mary, and if so, how?
