

Mary and Martha

“Women Who Dared”



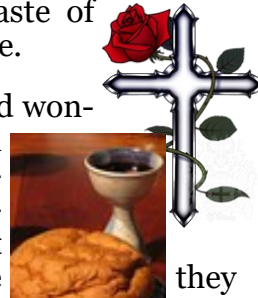
“Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.”
John 11:20

Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, are often mentioned although there is very little about them in the Bible. Maybe they are in the Bible because they exemplify the difference in siblings in addition to their devotion to Jesus.

Many scholars think that Martha was the older one of the sisters and it was her home so she was concerned about

all the guests. Mary was supposedly the younger and perhaps more scholarly. Martha was the one in the kitchen, worrying about details. Mary was more interested in being with Jesus. Once when Jesus was at the house, Mary poured expensive perfume on Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair as a symbol of her love for him. Martha thought it was a waste of an expensive perfume.

Sometimes I stop and wonder why certain things are in the Bible. Is there something that we aren't seeing. Why are they mentioned together

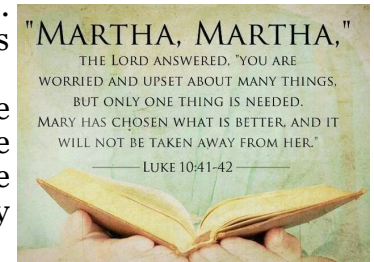


and why is preparation of food even important. Surely Christ ate at other stops along the way and we don't hear about that food being prepared. We often hear of siblings being compared, but this is one of the few times in the Bible. There were others who were disciples, but we don't hear any comparison of them. Perhaps it is to make us think about sibling rivalry and why we should try to avoid it because of the tensions it can cause. This particular Scripture shows some of the small tensions that may have existed between the sisters.

Martha was frustrated because there was work to be done and Mary was doing something that Martha thought was unnecessary. We remember that Judas also was upset with the perfume being used on the feet of Jesus. He said the

money would have been better used if the perfume had been sold and the money given to the poor. Mary gave her complete attention to Jesus. Although Martha also loved Jesus, she was concentrating on making sure everyone was fed. She played the role of a hostess to all people. Mary felt that the attention should all be on Christ. Jesus even told Martha that she worried too much. Both Mary and Martha showed great faith when their brother, Lazarus, died. Jesus told Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die" John 11:25-26 Martha responded with a confession of her own. "I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, He who comes into the world" John 11:27. Martha may have been serving her guests, but she knew that Jesus was someone special and acknowledged that to Jesus.

We can decide which way we want to go. The important thing is that both of them accepted Christ as their Savior and worshipped him. Most scholars seem to think that Martha had her priorities in the wrong place. Mary was concentrating on the special guest, Jesus. Martha was concerned about the world people that were there. Mary was so



willing to please Jesus that she even poured the expensive perfume on his feet and dried his feet with her hair. Martha was in the kitchen preparing food for the guests. Some seem to think that these sisters are in the Bible to remind us that we sometimes serve other people and think that our works are more important than our worship of Jesus. We all have different talents, and Jesus did not chastise either sister according to what we read in the Bible. He did tell them not to worry.

Both of them showed extreme faith that Jesus would be able to bring their brother, Lazarus, back to life even though he had been dead for four days. They both summon Jesus to come so their brother will not die. Martha is the first to run out when she sees Jesus approaching, but Mary's faith is just as deep.

The two women were courageous because they were openly acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God in an area very close to Jerusalem. But they loved Him even in the face of danger for their own lives. Their faith told them there was more to life than time on earth even at that early time. It is hard to imagine that they were busy worrying about pouring perfume on Jesus' feet or feeding the house guests when the very Lord they were talking to would be the victim of such horrific treatment within the next few days. Both, I'm sure were pleasing in the eyes of Christ that day. Each of us has a different talent, but together we can work for God's kingdom here on earth.

Martha Loved Him Too

A poem by Elwood McQuaid

We've been too hard on Martha
Because of that rebuff.

I think somehow we feel
She didn't love her Lord enough.

No, quite to the contrary,
Martha's love was such
That in her eagerness to serve,
She tried to do too much.

For there's a time for serving,
And there's a time for rest.
Everything in season;
Choosing what is best.

That hour had its "good part"
In sitting at His feet,
Taking in the blessed Word
Which is our bread and meat.

Things must stay in balance,
So let us pray from youth:
"God, give me Martha's diligence
And Mary's love for truth."

Prayer: Dear Lord, many times we criticize others for their way of worshipping. Help us to know that You love us just as we are, and will continue to love us and help us to do Your will if we only ask. Help us to realize that we need to balance our lives just as Mary and Martha learned. Amen

1. Should our love of Christ take precedent over our love of our fellow human beings? Is this a different kind of love?
2. Is it wrong to be a Martha? Is it wrong to be a Mary?
3. In addition to their love of Jesus, what does this story tell us about ourselves? How does this story apply to the verse, "Love the Lord with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself"?
4. Do we sometimes try to buy salvation by money or works instead of letting prayer, grace and faith be the primary source of salvation?

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