

Mary and Martha (The Fuller Picture) by Karene Scott

Luke 10 : 38-42 (Mary & Martha)

“Now it happened as they went that He (Jesus) entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.”

And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”

This story from the Bible bothers me, it really bothers me because I AM A MARTHA! Yes, it is true, I am the kind of person that wants to make sure everything is done before I sit down to relax. I often find when I go to read my bible, with a cup of tea of course, that I will inevitably see something out of place or in need of a clean, it is very hard to keep reading and pray without fixing the problem first...

and people like Mary, ahhhhh, it’s just so annoying when people don’t help but get to do the fun things like sitting listening to Jesus. Don’t we Martha’s just wish we could be Mary’s and that the Mary’s around us would be more like us Martha’s?

Okay now, can I get a show of hands, who here is a Martha? When something needs to be done, we are the ones to get it done.

Who is a Mary? Who say work smert give me Jesus anyday.

What we can take from this piece of scripture is that Martha was distracted with much serving. She wasn’t just distracted with servicing but it says she was distracted with MUCH servicing. This leads me to think she had gone overboard in her serving, maybe it wasn’t a simple meal she was preparing but something much more elaborate? We also learn that Jesus pointed out to her where it is

that she had gone wrong. He said she was “worried and troubled by many things”. Jesus wasn’t saying serving was wrong he was saying that she was stressing. He didn’t just leave it at that though, He pointed her to what the solution... to come, sit and listen to Him.

Jesus often did this kind of work in the New Testament when He pointed out a weakness in people He met, He wasn’t trying to humiliate them, He wanted to alert them to danger and point the way toward their healing. For example:

- To the Pharisees intent on appearing religious, Jesus pointed out the weakness of hypocrisy.
- To the rich young ruler requesting the way to heaven, Jesus exposed the dangerous tendency of loving money more than God.

And again Jesus does this with Martha, warning her of her tendency to get overwhelmed by troubles and worry.

You know if we only ever look at THIS story about Mary and Martha we actually miss out on the full picture of who these two women were. We can go around feeling a bit dejected if we are a Martha and a little smug if we are a Mary.

However, this is not the end of Mary and Martha because they were friends of Jesus we hear about them two other times in the Bible and when we look at all three stories together we get a much fuller picture of both women. We will see that both women have strengths and weaknesses.

John 11:1-7 and 17-44 (Lazarus Raised) Now as I am reading this please concentrate on what Mary and Martha say and act in this passage.

“Now a certain *man* was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was *that* Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.”

When Jesus heard *that*, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was. Then after this He said to *the* disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."

So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house.

Now Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. "But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, "The Teacher has come and is calling for you." As soon as she heard *that*, she arose quickly and came to Him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was⁽ⁿ⁾ in the place where Martha met Him. Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, "She is going to the tomb to weep there."

Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."

Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see."

Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!"

And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?"

Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone."

Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been *dead* four days."

Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?"

Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up *His* eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said *this*, that they may believe that You sent Me." Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."

What can we learn from this? We find Martha going out to meet Jesus while Mary sits at home. When she sees Jesus she says "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." Aha, here is a woman of great faith, her faith is a real strength in her character, even though her brother had died (and was dead 4 days) she knew that Jesus could do something about the situation, she may have not known what He could do but she knew He could do something.

When Mary goes out to meet Jesus she falls down at His feet and is weeping. She also says "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." However we don't read that she believed Jesus could do something about it. Mary is this an area of weakness, a lack of faith?

John 12:1-8 (Mary Anoints Jesus)

"Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.

But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denariiⁱⁿ and given to the poor?" This he

said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.

But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always."

So we find Martha serving again, but this time there is no complaining! Could it be that Martha is learning? I like to think she has taken onboard what Jesus said and serves the meal (without stressing) and then sits to listen to Jesus.

We also read about Mary's extravagant gift of pouring a pound of costly oil onto Jesus feet and wiping His feet with her hair, an act reserved for the lowliest servant and costing her a whole years wage. A gift that Jesus appreciated and showed her love for Him.

Lessons we learn from Mary and Martha:

- They both deeply loved Jesus and show this by their actions towards Him
- They both have strengths and weaknesses in their character
- Mary and Martha give us hope, we all have strengths and weaknesses in our character, but with Jesus we can grow in our strengths and work on our areas of weakness as he exposes them to us and gives us a way forward.

Know that when you follow Jesus he will confront you with your weaknesses and give you a way forward.

Why does He do this? Because He wants us to live an abundant life not a life that is limited by our weaknesses. He said "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10) He didn't say "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly except for those who will be weighed down by envy, greed, covertness, anger...etc" As you journey through life Jesus desires for you to become a better and better version of yourself, free from all that hinders you.

How does He do this? When you regularly read and study the bible, talk to God and grow in your Christian faith you will most certainly be confronted by your weaknesses. I know I have... Over the years I've been confronted by my own gluttony, envy, covertness, lack of contentment, my view on money (which was rubbish) and my tongue (what I say), O boy that's a current and ongoing one!

How does He heal us? My experience has been over time. Sometimes a long time... but one day you will realise that you have been set free, that the area of weakness in your life that was holding you back no longer impacts your life in a negative way.

My view on money as I said before was rubbish. Talk about selfish (it's not a very nice feeling, we know when we are being selfish, don't we...), I'm only fortunate that Randal is the opposite to me in this regard. You see I wasn't a grateful giver, more like a grumpy giver. I remember one time we gave \$100 to a family a Christmas, I wasn't one bit excited about that, \$100 that's a lot of money and I was thinking that's half of what we spend on the kids... then a week after we gave away the money I went to the letterbox and found an envelope with... yep that's right \$100 in it... Ok God, you have my attention and I'm sorry for my attitude.

I would say over the period of a year (maybe longer) God confronted me with this area of weakness and when He did I began to talk to Him about it, read all I could on the topic in the bible, listen to Christian preachers and Dave Ramsey and bought a couple of His books and then began putting into practice what I had learnt and the end result... I discover that money is all His anyway, not mine, that I am a steward of His money. Oh you can imagine I didn't like this viewpoint to begin with... but how liberating, how freeing to NOT hold so tightly onto your money.

Let's not overlook our strengths, Like Martha's faith or Mary's love, God has gifted each one of us with strengths, not sure what your strengths are? Ask God. Let's continue to develop our strengths and encourage those around us in theirs.

Let's stop comparing our strengths and weaknesses with those around us and be content with who we are.

And lastly, when you read the bible it is very helpful to read widely on the topic you are interested in to make sure you are really getting the most, the fullest picture of what God is saying to you. Don't just read one verse and think you have the all answers or you might just end up feeling dejected (like I did) that you are a Martha instead of a Mary, whereas it turns out being a Martha is pretty brilliant.