

Learning from Martha & Mary

Can you imagine opening your front door to find Jesus on the sidewalk, chatting with His disciples? I picture a scene a little like this when I read the **Bible** story of Mary and Martha.

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!" "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 10:38-42)

So, if Jesus were out front, would you have the forethought to invite Him in for dinner like Martha did? And if you drummed up the chutzpah, what might come next? Would you worry about the curtains? Or your dusty wood floors? Or the threadbare couch? Or the dog hair covering the pillows?

It doesn't seem that Martha was too worried. She eagerly invited Jesus in and showed Him the kind of authentic hospitality that throws the door wide and serves the best I have. Come to think of it, we can all learn a few things from Mary and Martha.

1. True hospitality is always in style.

Never mind the toilet that begs for a cleaning wand. Welcoming people into your home is a gift – a gift worth sharing, whether the place is pristine and decorated to perfection or not. Because true hospitality wraps a person up in a grace hug and makes them feel special. Never mind the dust bunnies or the random socks.

And hospitality is something you and I can do right now. We can open our homes and our hearts to the family next door with the noisy dogs, to the couple that sits right behind us in church, or to the women we chat with at Bible study. What's the ~~worst~~ best that could happen? You cement a new friendship, laugh at some dust, and enjoy a little grace environment together.

2. Comparison only breeds anxiety and discontent.

As the Mary/Martha story unfolds, we find Mary smack in the middle of the living room, sitting with the boys, soaking up Jesus's words. Martha? Well, she's scurrying around the kitchen like a whirlwind, checking the roast lamb, setting the table, and finishing the cake. This woman is on a mission and will not stop until all of the guests are happily rubbing full stomachs.

But there's just one problem: here's poor Martha trying to serve dinner for fifteen or more with *zero help!* She flies past the living room and sees her sister out of the corner of her eye, and that's the last straw. I can just hear Martha's frustrated thoughts: *How dare she do this to me? My own sister! Doesn't she see that I'm doing everything on my own?!*

And that's where discontent begins – when Martha compares her current life to someone else's and realizes she's holding the short straw. Isn't that the same kind of trap we get caught in sometimes? When I look at "her" life with those big, happy smiles on social media or the beautifully "perfect" children or the bigger, nicer house than mine, discontent perches on my shoulder.

Comparison is a trickster, though, because he never tells the full story. When we look at someone else's life, we only catch a snapshot. And just like the smiling Christmas photo that never hints at the pre-pose argument or the toddler's screaming fit right afterward, we miss the rest of the story too.

Truth is, no matter how it looks on the outside, God is at work in every story. No two stories are exactly the same. And comparison doesn't change her story or yours. It just steals your joy.

3. When you're struggling, go to the best Source first.

Martha's a smart cookie, though. When she gets disgruntled by the unfairness of her situation, she wastes no time. She knows exactly who can fix things. Martha marches right up to the highest authority in the room and commands Jesus, "Make my sister come and help me."

There's something to be said for knowing who can help. Sometimes we can be tempted to share our problems with everyone else – prayer requests, social media, mom, the bestie – when the wisest thing to do is to approach the One who can actually fix things first. Martha knew what she was doing.

4. You can tell Jesus anything.

How interesting that Jesus doesn't rebuke Martha for her words. He doesn't say, "Make your sister come and help you?" Listen here, girlie, you do *not* get to speak to me that way. Don't you know who I am?" Jesus accepts Martha where she is, as she is, and listens to her tirade without batting an eye.

You have that kind of audience with Jesus too. He's a strong God, after all, who doesn't get miffed or offended when you come to Him in the middle of emotional upheaval. He won't mind if you tell Him exactly what you're feeling. In fact, He adores you and longs to hear about anything you face. Jesus is your perfect Friend and Brother: approachable, loving, and eager to listen.

5. The path to peace begins with one thing.

After Martha says her piece, Jesus offers her the path to peace. Jesus tells 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." (**Luke 10:41-41**)

Jesus reminded Martha – and us – what to be "concerned" with, where to focus, and what should take a front row seat in our brains: relationship with Him.

When we concentrate on Jesus first, we discover that we are never truly alone or without help. (**Hebrews 13:5**) We experience that His grace is sufficient for all that we face. (**2 Corinthians 9:8**) And we find inner peace and strength to face whatever comes our way. (**John 14:27**) Those are the kinds of truths that keep us calm in even the busiest seasons of life and serving.

So, here's to throwing the front door wide. May we find the chutzpah and joy of inviting people in, and may we cling to the peace of the "one thing" in the middle of ordinary, crazy life.

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<https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/bible-study/5-lessons-women-can-learn-from-mary-and-martha.html>