

Mary and Martha

Luke 10:38-42

Key Theme: Resting in Our Father's Presence

[Core Gospel Concepts: Intimacy with the Father, Sin, Identity in Christ]

THE STORY:

One day Jesus and his disciples were traveling, and they 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 Jesus 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 only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Optional Memory Verse: Luke 10:42: *"Only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her."*

Introduction Question (discuss with a neighbor)

Why should we pray? What are your motivations for praying or taking time to be with God?

Teacher's Transition Statement

Today's story tells us about two women who welcomed Jesus into their home, but they did so in very different ways. Let's look together at how they each came to Jesus.

Learn Story Together (Listening Task)

- As you're committing this story to memory, consider these questions:
 - What choice did Mary make when Jesus arrived in her home?
 - What choice did Martha make when Jesus arrived? How did she respond to Mary's choice?

Basic Outline of Discussion (to help facilitator lead without reading everything)

- **Martha:** What was she like? What was good? What was not good? How did she treat Jesus and her sister? What was most important to her?
- **Mary:** What was her attitude toward Jesus? What was most important to her?
- **Jesus:** How did he respond to Martha's complaint? What was most important to him?
- **Us:** What does Jesus most want from us?
- **Good works / spiritual disciplines:** What can we learn from this story?
- **Application:** What needs to change in my life after studying this story - after learning how Jesus just wants us to enjoy his presence and learn from him? What actions, attitudes, or beliefs? How can we love others better?
- **Sharing:** Who needs to hear this story?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (with some possible responses):

- **What did Martha do when Jesus came to her village? What did she do when Jesus came into her house?**
 - *She welcomed him into her home, and she began to make preparations for his visit.*
- **What did Mary do when Jesus came into the house? Where was she? What was her attitude?**
 - *Mary sat at Jesus' feet, listening to his teaching.*
 - *Her attitude was one of humility and eagerness to be with Jesus, to be near him, to listen to him, to sit with him.*
- **Why was Martha upset? What did she do about it? What did this reveal about her heart? What was Martha most concerned about? What do you think really motivated her or caused her to be that way? Why was Martha's work so important to her?**
 - *Martha opened her home to Jesus, but she failed to open her heart to him.*
 - *Serving Jesus is good, but Martha was so busy trying to make him think well of her that she failed to slow down and to know him personally and listen to him.*
 - *Martha was very distracted by all the work she thought she needed to do. Perhaps she was too concerned about looking good in front of her visitors.*
- **What was Mary most concerned about? Why do you think she was that way?**
 - *Mary wanted to know Jesus, sit in his presence, listen to his words.*
 - *She was most concerned with having a relationship with Jesus.*
- **What was Jesus' response to Martha's complaint?**
 - *"You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."*
- **What mattered most to Jesus when he went into someone's house or entered into their life?**
 - *Relationship with him.*
 - *Affecting their heart.*
 - *Loving them.*
- **How did Martha treat Mary in this story? Why?**
 - *She was angry, blaming, and judgmental.*
 - *Mary was not joining in Martha's priorities. She was making her look bad and making her work harder.*
- **When we allow our "good" work for God to prevent us from being with our Father, how does it affect the way we treat other people?**
 - *Makes us proud, angry, jealous of other people who are not working as hard as we are.*
 - *Prevents us seeing and loving other people the way that God sees and loves them.*
- **In what way is Martha like the elder brother in the story of the Two Lost Sons?**
 - *Martha felt that she deserved Jesus' favor because of her work for him.*
 - *She wanted Jesus' approval more than she wanted to be with him.*
 - *She believed that hard work would make her right with God.*
 - *She was self-righteous, judgmental toward her sibling, and self-centered.*

- **If someone really understands and believes what Jesus has done for them – that he died on the cross and rose again for them - how can that help them long for fellowship with the Father?**
 - *If we think that we must keep earning God's favor by our hard work for him, we will remain anxious when it becomes difficult or we are failing.*
 - *If we trust fully in what Jesus did for us, we can relax sometimes and take time to sit with him, not feeling guilty about all the work we need to “produce” in order to feel good about ourselves.*
 - *Understanding the cross will help us see that God wants to be our Father, wants us to value our relationship with him, and wants us to sit and listen to him.*

General Application Questions (discuss with whole group)

- **How do we resemble Martha at times?**
 - *want to look good in front of others, to improve or maintain our reputations*
 - *want to feel proud, confident, and righteous before God*
 - *are so concerned about doing our duty that we don't take time to sit and listen to our Father who loves us.*
- **What are some common things in our lives that distract us from really sitting in the Father's presence?**
- **If knowing Jesus and being with him in his presence became the most important thing in our lives, how might we live differently? How would our attitudes be different? Or our actions? How can slow down to “sit” with and listen to Jesus help us to love others?**
- **If people in your church began considering knowing Jesus more important than all other activities or concerns, how do you think your church would be different than it is now?**

Personal Application Questions (choose one or two for small group discussion):

- **Can you think of a recent situation where you felt like Martha in this story? Perhaps a situation in your own life when you have failed to love others because of your busy work for the Lord?**
- **What works do you do “for the Lord”? How does this work, even though it is good, sometimes distract you from what is really needed - to be with your Father? What are you “worried and upset” about today? How can you repent of these distractions?**