

Women of the Bible- Mary and Martha

Adapted from Rose Publishing & Bible Women by Coleman Overby

I. Introduction

- a. *What do we know of these women?*
- b. They lived in the town of Bethany.
- c. They were followers of Christ
- d. They had a brother, Lazarus, who was also a follower of Christ

II. Luke 10:38-42

- a. What do we learn about Martha from this passage?
 - i. She was hospitable- welcoming Jesus to her home
 - ii. She was distracted
 1. Do we ever get distracted from the more important things by the lesser?
 - iii. She was a people watcher
- b. What do we learn about Mary from this passage?
 - i. She was anxious to learn.
 1. What is unusual about this? Who generally sat at the feet of the teachers in early Jewish society? *It was the customary position to take at the feet of the Rabbi- a position reserved for men. In fact it was forbidden by their traditions for a Rabbi to teach a woman.*
- c. Comments on Martha and Mary. Contrasts?

III. John 11:1-8, 17-44

- a. Vs 1-8- What is revealed about the sisters in the first three verses of this chapter?
 - i. They had some faith in Jesus- so they “sent” for him (v 3)
 - ii. They recognized a special relationship between Christ and Lazarus
- b. Vs 17-27- One goes and one stays. Why? What difference do we see in the two?
 - i. *“Martha was a “take-care-of-business” person, while Mary was more meditative. It was customary to sit in times of intense bereavement.” WJ*
 - ii. How does Martha come to Jesus? Why? Do you think she wants an answer for Jesus delay?
- c. Discuss their conversation in verses 21-27
 - i. What is revealed about Martha in this exchange?
 1. Faith in the relationship she (and her family) had with Jesus- she believed that Jesus would have healed
 2. Faith in Jesus power to heal- he would not have died!
 3. Continued faith, even during her hard times (v 22)
 4. Knowledge and belief in the resurrection (v 24)
 - a. Do you think that during these hard moments, this faith was comforting?
 5. “Settled conviction” (v 27) - “I have believed” ASV, NASB, YLT; “I have always believed” NLT
 - a. What is it she has settled conviction about?
- d. Discuss verses 28-37

- i. What do you think of Mary's comment to Jesus in verse 32? It is the same as Martha's statement. Does this demonstrate that they had talked about it amongst themselves prior to this?
- ii. What does this text demonstrate about Martha? Mary?
 - 1. Martha goes quickly to get her sister. Perhaps demonstrating further the strong bond between these two sisters.
 - 2. Mary –
 - a. Faith in their relationship with Jesus
 - b. Faith in the power of Jesus
 - c. Care and love for her brother (v 33)
- e. Discuss verses 38-44
 - i. What do we see in Martha's exchange with the Lord?
 - 1. She is practical- He is dead. Has been four days (v 39)
 - 2. She had underestimated and misunderstood his comments in verse 25-26

IV. John 12:1-8 (Mt 26:6-13, Mk 14:3-9)

- a. How do we see the personality differences of Martha and Mary?
- b. What did Martha bring to Christ in this story?
 - i. Service
- c. What did Mary bring to Christ?
 - i. Sacrifice- the items were very expensive (Judas estimates at about a year's wages)
 - ii. Humility- the washing and cleaning of feet was a servants job
 - iii. Devotion- Mary unbound her hair (which was uncommon in public) and wiped the feet of Jesus. She gave of her possessions (nard) and she gave of herself- literally wiping his feet with her hair.
- d. How did some view Mary's actions?
 - i. A waste (Mk 14:4)
 - 1. They considered this good act done to honor Jesus Christ a waste.
 - ii. They "scolded her" (Mk 14:5)
- e. How did Jesus view Mary's actions?
 - i. "*She has done what she could*" (Mk 14:8)
 - ii. They were beautiful (Mk 14:6)
 - iii. They were in preparation of his burial
 - iv. They would be remembered through time- "*in memory of her*" (Mk 14:9)
 - 1. Three gospels tell her story here. Fulfilling Jesus statement.

V. How do we see the influential qualities of Martha?

- a. She was committed to hospitality (Lk 10:38)
- b. She was a hard worker (Lk 10:40)
- c. She had great faith in Christ- Notice her confession of faith in Jn 11:21-22, 27

VI. How do we see the influential qualities of Mary?

- a. She had a deep love for the words of Christ (Lk 10:39)

- b. She had a deep and sacrificial love for Christ- notice her act of washing Christ's feet in Jn 12:1-8)
- VII. Is it a fair question to ask, who was the better disciple of Christ, Martha or Mary?
- a. Is it not true that we should strive instead to be like both of them?
 - b. What would the church be like if all the Christian women were like Martha? Like Mary?