

jenaministries – Part 4 Bible Characters

8. Martha and Mary Sisters – Listen and Learn or Serve?

Martha and Mary were sisters. Martha opened the door to Jesus and invited him to eat (**Scriptures 1. At the Home of Martha and Mary Luke 10:38-42**). Martha was busy preparing the food, but Mary wasn't helping at all. She was just sitting at Jesus' feet listening to him. Martha got frustrated and requested Jesus to tell Mary to help her with the food preparation. But Jesus' reply was unexpected. Jesus told Martha that Mary was doing the better thing, listening to him.

For some, Jesus' reply seems unfair. Why should Martha have to do all the work? Jesus was invited to eat, so someone had to do the cooking and preparing. If both Mary and Martha had sat at Jesus' feet to listen to him, there would have been no meal to eat. That could have been considered rude to invite someone to eat, but not prepare a meal. And I imagine that Jesus was probably hungry.

But it was more important for Jesus to teach Martha priorities than to sustain his hunger. Our priorities should be to listen and learn from the Lord first, then serve others. That one on one time with God and the Holy Bible is very important. It's how we get to know God and learn what his will for us. It allows God to lead and direct us. If you are serving others first without listening and learning from God, then you are just doing it to help others. Which is not a bad thing. But if you want to serve the Lord, you need to listen and learn first.

Jesus, at another time, explained the importance of listening and learning. It's crucial for our salvation (**Scriptures 2. I Never Knew You Away From Me Matthew 7:21-23**). We can follow all the rules to the best of our abilities, drive demons out of people, go to church regularly, help the needy, and give to the poor; but still not be saved. To be saved and make Jesus our lord, we must have that one on one time with him and spend time studying his word (Holy Bible). That's how we get to know him and learn his will for us.

The sisters Martha and Mary had another important learning experience with Jesus. Their brother Lazarus had fallen ill. Very ill. So the sisters sent a desperate word to Jesus (**Scriptures 3. Martha and Mary and Lazarus John 11:1-44**). But Jesus didn't rush over to them because he wanted to teach something. By the time Jesus finally got there, Lazarus had already been dead and in the tomb for a while. Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." Jesus did raise Lazarus from the dead.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came Lazarus' house for a dinner given in Jesus' honor (**Scriptures 4. Jesus Anointed with Expensive Perfume John 12:1-8**). Martha did the food preparation. Lazarus declined at the table with Jesus. Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume and poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. One of the disciples complained that she shouldn't have wasted expensive perfume, but should have sold it for money to give to the poor. Jesus told him that the perfume was intended for the day of his burial. And that they will always have the poor among them, but they will not always have him (in person).

Jesus used Martha and Mary to teach us that we should always put him (Jesus) first. Then serve others as led by him. Jesus should always be above everyone and everything else in our lives.

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Scriptures 1. At the Home of Martha and Mary

Luke 10:38-42

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."

Scriptures 2. I Never Knew You Away From Me

Matthew 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

Scriptures 3. Martha and Mary and Lazarus

John 11:1-44 Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, **the village of Mary and her sister Martha. (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.)** So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." **Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.** So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light."

After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

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Scriptures 3. Martha and Mary and Lazarus - continued

On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you."

When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there. When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. Jesus wept.

Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

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Scriptures 4. Jesus Anointed with Expensive Perfume

John 12:1-8 Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."