

Bible e-Study Women of the New Testament #7

Mary and Martha.

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!” Luke 10:40

NUGGET – Look up [Luke 10:38-42](#) and read there the story about one of Jesus’ visits to the home of Mary and Martha. Having the whole picture helps us to understand Martha and her concerns in the nugget verse today. After all she invited the Lord and opened her home to Him, of course she was distracted, she wanted to be a good hostess.

But what is interesting is that she thought that her concern was the Lord’s concern as well. In her *distraction* with the preparations, she forgot the *focus* of the preparations... she forgot the Lord.

You’ve heard me say, “he’s so heavenly minded, he’s no earthly good”? That may be too harsh to use to describe Martha here but the thought does help us to understand why Jesus answered her the way He did. “Martha, Martha you worried and upset:

1. about many things, but
2. only one thing is needed.

Jesus was gently and lovingly teaching Martha (and through her, us) that focusing on Him is the ‘one thing needed’. He wasn’t saying that the work that Martha was doing shouldn’t be done, but that the ‘many things’ that we can worry about and be upset by should not distract us from Him. Mary had chosen ‘what is better’, which was to sit at the feet of Jesus... and listen.

Martha, in today’s verse, is someone we can easily identify with. Don’t we want to see other’s do what we think is important? But that makes us the center of focus when it is ‘better’ to draw others to a greater awareness of Christ. That is not the easier thing to do, but is better, for them.

APPLICATION – Thank God for Martha, she helps us distinguish the important from the urgent.

1. Stop right now for a moment and think about what your day ahead contains. Are there urgent things that *can* be removed from crowding out the *important* that is needed?
2. That listening thing that Mary was doing is something we think we can ‘multitask’ with other things. Take out your Bible when someone is talking on the radio or TV and read it, now what did you get out of either?

PRAY – Give thanks to God for making us aware of our need for Jesus and for allowing us to share Him with others.

*Going Deeper together. We meet in the **Fellowship Hall** during the Education Hour for discussion and prayer with all those who’re able to come. If you’re not able to make it Sunday, please feel free to e-mail me with your comments or questions so that we can have the benefit of sharing them together.*

Peace in Christ, Pastor Tom Rhodes

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH
'HEARING, SHARING AND LIVING THE GOSPEL'

Rev. Thomas A. Rhodes, Pastor



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GOING DEEPER

Read through the account of Jesus coming to visit Mary and Martha on the occasion of the death of their brother, Jesus' friend, Lazarus in [John 11:1-45, 12:1-11](#).

Remember we said a few weeks ago when we talked about some of the mystery women of the New Testament, that we would discover the identity of the woman who poured expensive perfume on Jesus feet and wiped His feet with her hair? Well here she is! It's Mary of Mary and Martha fame! She is described differently than the woman who wept on Jesus feet and dried them with her hair in [Luke 7:38](#).

In this report in John 11 of Jesus' visit to Mary and Martha's we see in Mary, a deep and abiding devotion to Jesus. It was expressed in the nugget section today with her sitting at Jesus feet, and now in John ([12:1-3](#)) we see her again at Jesus feet only this time pouring out her expensive perfume on them and dry them with her hair.

What parallels or insights might you draw from these two actions of Mary, sitting first at Jesus feet listening to Him, and now, after raising her brother, pouring out her expensive perfume on His feet in obvious devotion? What then can Mary's examples open our eyes to in our own lives?

Turning now to look at Martha. From her words here in [11:21-24](#) what can be said that has perhaps changed for Martha, or in Martha, from what we learned from her in the nugget section?

And when you read her response to what Jesus says ([in 25-28](#)) why does it sound familiar? Who else has said this or something like it? What makes Martha's unique?

Also take note that after she has replied to Jesus she goes and calls her sister. Martha may have been changed from earlier but not altogether and that's good. She is still looking out for others but now it is with a different motivation, it is a gospel motivation that moves her. She has gone out to meet Jesus. She has openly confirmed her trust in Him and who He is and she *now* takes that trust and understanding and goes and gets her sister. Have others done something like this? After an encounter with Jesus they go and tell others? What effect might this have in our lives?

Martha also does one other thing for us in her own unique way. We know she likes to look after what is proper and needed to be done. She cares and shows her care in action and words, openly engaging others. And she continues to do so with Jesus. When Jesus goes to the tomb ([11:38-39](#)) and asks for the stone to be rolled away Martha, in her concern, points out how long Lazarus has been in the tomb what will come out of the tomb when the stone is rolled away. (Or what would come wafting out!) [To get a sense of how important the sense of smell is, take little vanilla and maybe some cinnamon, add that to a cup of water and warm it up on the stove, how does that odor affect you?]

Because of Martha's concern we are certain of how long Lazarus was dead and that's important. In that day and culture there was the idea that the soul could perhaps be still with the body for up to 3 days. By waiting until Lazarus had been dead 4 days there was no doubt in anyone's mind he was dead.

And so Martha is trying to look out for Jesus and the others, but she is not prepared for the reality of what does come out of the tomb. It is not the smell of death, as she and certainly the others expected. Why? Because Jesus is there. Jesus **is** who Martha had said He was, the Christ, the One who brings the fragrance of life into the world and into us to carry to others. ([2 Cor 2:15-17](#)) Go and spread the aroma of God's Peace, Pastor Rhodes.