

MARY AND MARTHA LUKE 10:38-42

Why would a little family squabble make it into the Bible? Some people see in the story two classic personality types Martha. Task orientated. Mary. Relationally orientated so for Martha, getting the job done well is the most important thing. For Mary, it is all about relationships.

What is the cultural context here?

- It seems as if Jesus popped in , as if this was not a planned visit.
- It seems as if Jesus knew Mary and Martha well. They lived just outside of Jerusalem. Might have been a bolt hole that Jesus used to get away from people
- Hospitality was cultural very important. As Jesus was an important person, it would have been important culturally to put on a nice meal
- The words sitting at Jesus feet are also loaded terms. At that time, these are the words used of a disciple of a rabbi. There were no female rabbis and no female disciples. Unheard of. Therefore, Jesus is allowing Mary (and Martha) to be a disciple

Martha fully expected Jesus to affirm her complaint. It was not fair that she was doing all the work while Mary just sat there listening. And if you look at Jesus teaching you can see lots of evidence of why she would expect this. Matthew 20:28 Luke 22:27 Matthew 23:11

Jesus affirms the role of servanthood. If those who serve are the greatest in the kingdom then why is Martha not affirmed? Many women relate to this story because they feel Martha represents them with their husbands. How come you just sit there and expect me to cater to you. It is not fair that I am running around after you all the time while you sit in front of the TV.

Many also get angry at this story because it seems that Jesus does not affirm their work. You could read the story to be saying the work of cleaning and cooking and caring for others is dismissed as not that important. But the spiritual work is affirmed as really important. So who was going to cook the dinner if Martha just sat around like Mary.

Some think the scene is like this. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. He wants some quiet time with his friends. He just wants a simple meal. Not after a feast. Just

wants to hang out with them as he is heading for the horrors to come. However, Martha wants to honour Jesus and create the very best meal she can. So she has prepared a five-course meal. Jesus was not wanting or expecting that. Only one thing is needed. But Martha is one of those hosts that can't do just simple. She has to have everything just perfect. She wants every detail to be just right. Jesus is saying. Well it is not wrong to serve me like this but Mary has chosen relationship as the most important and I am not going to take that off her. So the reality is that Martha service is really about Martha and not what Jesus needed or wanted. She is looking for Jesus commendation of all her hard work. Jesus is saying actually the most important thing is just spending time with me.

We can serve to be noticed. We can serve to earn God's approval We can serve to feel important. But true service is a love response to a God who is passionately in love with you. If we are serve but then complain about others not serving, then actually we have not really got the attitude of serving.

The placement of the story is interesting. Just after the story of the good smarting. All about serving the stranger. We are called to serve others. And yet Luke has chosen to place this little incident directly after. Why. Surely Martha was serving? I think it is placed where it is as a check. We are called to serve. But our service comes out of our relationship with Jesus. If we are constantly serving and not sitting at the feet of Jesus, then we will burn out and become disillusioned. Again, this is very relevant to us, and especially those involved in a ministry of some kind. Everything we do comes out of relationship with God. We can be that busy doing God's work we lose touch with God. Then after a few years, we wonder we feel so burnt out.

Anything of value that we do flows out of who we are. It flows from the kind of person we are. In addition, if we are not drawing on the resources of God, if we are not filling ourselves afresh with the Spirit, then what we do will become empty and hollow. We become more Christ like as we spend time with him. We can truly serve with no agenda when we know God loves us. When we know that nothing we do can make God, love us more. Only a person who is truly secure can serve. They know they don't need to seek the limelight. They don't require being thanked. They know who they are in God.



But I wonder if today there is another message in this passage as well. An even more important one. How do I live a life that is not distracted. Martha was distracted. We today live in a world of total distraction. The tension is not between the task orientated versus the relationally orientated.

The issue is that we are totally and constantly distracted. We have noise all the time. We have our cell phones all the time. We have social media all the time. We are totally and utterly distracted.

I am not sure that doing our devotions on our cell phone and using our Bibles on our cell phones is actually a good idea. I am not saying that from an anti tech point of view. However, when we do this, it means we still have our cell phones with us and can be interrupted at any time.

Do we set aside time with God without our cell phone? Do we have to be constantly available in case someone rings. There is nothing wrong with our cell phones, but have we lost the ability to be still and to hear from God.

When was the last time you spent time truly alone with no noise in your life at all?

I think if we are to apply this passage today, then it is a call to come away from the distraction and busyness of our lives, and just to set afresh at the feet of Jesus. Just to be alone with God. With no distractions around us at all.

Our busyness and distraction are stopping us from being aware of what is happening in our inner world. It distracts us from being aware of the presence of God. It distracts us from hearing the whispers of the Holy Spirit. It distracts us from listening to the Word of God.

I think one of the huge challenges from this passage is this. Are you willing to come aside and sit with Jesus?

Here is my retake of this story

As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Auckland, (because Auckland was where all the important stuff really happened) they came to a town named Taupo, where a woman named Martha invited him to stay at her home by the lake

Her sister Mary spent the evening listening to Jesus. But Martha was distracted by her cell phone and kept getting lots of texts every few minutes. I just have to answer this she said all the time.

Eventually Martha came to Jesus and said. Lord, tell Mary to stop sitting around being lazy. I have had so

many texts this evening and she is not doing a thing to help. Half the time I can never even get hold of her because she does not reply to my texts.

However, the Lord said to her. My dear Martha, you are distracted all the time by your cell phone and what other people are doing. But Mary has given her whole attention to me for the evening, and I will not let you judge her for this.

What is our cell phone taking from us? What is our noisy life taking from us? What is our constant busyness taking from us?

What are we missing out on because of our distractions?

Suggest we are missing focus on our life. Consumed by the trivial. We are missing contentment. Life is lived in comparison to what others are posting. We are missing life. Living in virtual reality. We are missing deep relationship with God. We are missing rest. Tiring. Maybe today God is calling you to a life less distracted.

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REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

What annoys you about this story?

Are you a task-focused person or a people focused person? What annoys you about the one you are not?

What hinders us from sitting at Jesus feet?

What drives our need to be so busy or to be so distracted?

Is busyness and distraction a way of hiding from the inner reality of our lives?

What is your relationship with your cell phone? Do you have signs of addiction to it? ☺

Brain storm on how to lead a less busy or less distracted life.



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