

## Ordinary People part #5 Mary of Bethany - Worship

The story of Mary and Martha, Where –  
Jesus emphasizes the importance of prioritizing listening to and being present with him over being overly busy with tasks....

Highlighting that while service is good, ***focusing on a deeper relationship with God*** through *attentive listening* is “the better part” or “the one thing necessary.”

### Key Points:

#### Martha’s distraction:

Martha is busy preparing food and attending to the needs of Jesus as a guest, while her sister Mary sits at Jesus’ feet listening to his teachings.

#### Mary’s Choice:

Jesus commends Mary for choosing the “better part” by focusing on listening to his words rather than being consumed by tasks of hospitality.

#### Lesson on Priorities:

This passage is often interpreted as a reminder to prioritize spiritual nourishment (listening to God’s word) over worldly activities, even when they seem necessary.

### Luke 10:38-42 - Mary and Martha Worship and Serve

38 Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. 39 And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word. 40 But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.” 41 And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. 42 But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”

### Serving God involves activity and worship.

- Both are **needed** for balance.
- Jesus commended **Mary** because ***she was ready to worship with humility.***

## I. TWO ASPECTS OF SERVING GOD

It is essential for **all Christians to know** what is acceptable in God’s economy.

The story of Mary and Martha contains examples and principles for us to follow and pitfalls to stay away from in our personal worship of the Lord Jesus.

One of the motives behind Martha's behavior may have been a desire to obey the Law of Moses concerning hospitality.

**Leviticus 19:33-34** - 'And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. 34 The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

- To the Hebrew mind the care of guests was very important.
- To accommodate strangers was to keep the law.
- So how much more important it would be **to serve friends!**

**There are many customs we keep that are worthy traditions, but every custom and tradition should be subject to the scrutiny of Scripture.**

- Martha was so consumed with her busyness that it affected her attitude.
- She questioned the Lord's lack of response to what she felt was worthy of commendation, but her busyness in making preparations for all.
- But a person's busyness in human matters can cause a lack of spiritual discernment and stifle spiritual growth.
- At the same time, our busy schedules may promote carnality from our pride of performance.
- **Martha's attitude was apparent** in her outburst to Jesus' questioning whether He cared if she did all the work.

**Luke 10:40** But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore, tell her to help me."

- **Luke 10:40** describes Martha as being "**distracted**" with her serving.
- In today's language we might say she was obsessive in her serving.
- When something is **distracted**, it is difficult to handle or manage.
- **There are many activities** in our lives, especially in the church, **that are important and necessary.**
- But activity or works can **never** save us.
- Moreover, if we are not careful, **they can hinder our salvation experience.**

Apparently, Martha felt that ***providing for the physical needs*** of the Lord ***exempted her from stopping and listening to Him*** as He taught.

***It is dangerous to think that we can substitute various types of activities for a spirit of worship.***

***We need to remember the warning of Jesus*** in the Book of Revelation to Ephesus: **Revelation 2:2-4** - 2 "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not and have found them liars; 3 and you have persevered and have patience and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. 4 Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

***Work is important, but the nurturing of our love for Christ is more important!***

**Mary was looking for One who was more than a teacher or prophet.**

- There was a desire in her worship to develop a deeper, more spiritual relationship with Christ.
- She was ready to commit all she had to receive truth and life from Jesus.

***Martha was ruled by a sense of duty that kept her from enjoying the liberty of worship.***

- Mary had **developed a discernment** that **freed her from any burden of duty** that would **prevent her from benefiting** from **Christ's words**.
- It is essential for us ***to discern when the Spirit moves us beyond our traditional forms of worship to a place of greater blessing.***

**II. THE LORD'S VIEW - Whenever we try to form a discipline of worship, we must base it on what is acceptable to God.**

**During His days in the flesh Jesus showed Himself to be worthy of worship.**

- **He did so with** *the power of His Word* and **the miracles He performed**.
- **As different people** responded to Him **in different ways**,
- **Jesus made it clear** to them **what He would receive as worship** and **what He would reject**.
- Recognizing **His view of the things we do** is essential.
- ***We need God to direct us*** into the ways **that are acceptable to Him**.

***In the formation of the New Testament church there came a time when energetic people were sought out by the apostles for the work of the church.***

***In Acts chapter 6 the apostles instructed the disciples to begin a search for seven men full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.***

- ***They needed some faithful people*** who would be in charge over the business of the church.
- ***They were to oversee the distribution of food and other provisions*** for the widows in the church.
- ***The people sought out those who could lead them in the activity of serving others.***

***Acts chapter 6 tells us the names of those men who were selected,***

- Among whom is named ***Stephen***, who later was noted for doing great miracles and wonders among the people.
- ***Stephen was subsequently stoned to death for his boldness*** before the Jews in the synagogue.
- ***Stephen*** is an example of one who could contribute well to the work of the business activities of the church and still retain his spiritual discernment and authority.

***It should not be a matter of choosing one or the other, but a matter of conducting one's life with a careful balance of both realms.***

***Martha busied herself doing good things.***

- It is obvious that she was not lazy.
- Clearly, she was ***performing work that should be done***.
- Martha became ***frustrated*** toward Mary, ***who sat at Jesus' feet***.
- ***Martha interrupted Jesus*** and asked Him whether He cared that she worked while Mary sat.
- Martha, in her efforts to prepare food for her guests, ***was neglecting the benefits of Jesus' presence***.
- ***Being busy with the work of God*** can cause us to fall into the snare of inattention to spiritual matters.

***When it seems that recognition does not come our way, we may cry out like Martha. "Doesn't anyone notice that I'm the only one working around here?"***

***The great danger of activity without worship is that it stunts spiritual growth.***

If we allow ourselves to be occupied with good and necessary activities without regard to the more important spiritual matters, our worship will become empty! fanaticism.

**III. TRUE WORSHIP - 1 Chronicles 16:29** - Give to the Lord the glory due His name; Bring an offering and come before Him. Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!

- **The design of worship is to bring us into the presence of God.**
- The Lord highly esteems **an attitude of heartfelt worship**.
- Any Christian ***who has a desire to lay aside his agenda, worries, and cares of life for the call to worship*** is doing that which is **vital to his spiritual life**.

**Do what the Lord considers to be our reasonable service:**

**Romans 12:1 - A Living Sacrifice** - Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

Perhaps the greatest example of Mary's desire to worship Jesus and express her love and appreciation to Him is found in the story following the raising of her brother Lazarus back to life.

After this great miracle, Jesus attended a supper at their home given in His honor.

- **It was a public celebration** with many attending, including
- **Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Judas Iscariot, and other disciples.**

This miracle had caused many Jews to believe in Jesus, He had power over death.  
**They should have realized that Jesus was more than a prophet or teacher.**

**In John 12:2 Martha is again busy serving.**

**Mary still was finding value in the spiritual aspects of Christ's presence.**

**John 12:2-3** - 2 Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him.

**Once again, she found her way to His feet, but this time it was not only for what she could receive from Him; she brought to Him a valuable offering of her love for Him.**

3 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.

To glorify is to make something or someone more splendid or larger.

- ***Glorifying God with our praises, testimonies, or actions exalts Him before others and thereby enhances His ability to minister to them.***
- ***Mary glorified Jesus by anointing His head and feet with her precious ointment.***
- ***Like the O.T. priest being anointed before being able to minister at the altar of sacrifice,***
- ***Jesus was consecrated prior to making sacrifice for the people.***
- ***He was not only the One who would offer the sacrifice, but He would be the sacrificial lamb Himself.***

***The only way to facilitate an attitude of worship is through the Word of God.***

Mary of Bethany ***is a good example of the benefits of hearing the Word of God and its role in worship.***

In Luke 10:39, Mary is pictured at Jesus' feet listening to His words.

**Romans 10:17** So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

- The apostle ***Paul in the Book of Romans revealed –***
- ***That faith comes from and is increased by the hearing of God's Word.***

***Jesus commended Mary's desire to hear His words when He said,***

**Luke 10:42** But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.

- ***The Word of God has an eternal effect on our lives.***

**No Christian can live spiritually without a regular diet of the Word of God.**

**Hosea 4:6 - My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.**

Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

- ***The Lord said through the prophet Hosea –***
- ***That a lack of knowledge would destroy His people.***
- ***It is still true that we must have knowledge of God's Word.***
- ***Mary was one who made certain she heard the words of Jesus.***

***We should make it a priority to be present*** when God's Word is preached/taught.

**1 Corinthians 1:21** - For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

- Preaching is ***God's chosen vehicle to save*** those who believe.

**Galatians 3:5** Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or **by the hearing of faith?**

- This hearing *is the preaching of the gospel.*
- The Word of God is essential to our worship!

**Obey the Word of God.** All the great people of the Bible had one thing in common. They all obeyed the Word of God.

- **Abraham** left his home to answer the call of God.
- **Moses** carried the burden of leading a nation that continually resisted the Word of God, but Moses obeyed the Lord.
- **Joseph** endured the contradiction of an innocent paying for the guilty.
- **David** failed God and committed terrible sins, yet ultimately he submitted himself to the prophets and to the Word of God.

***It is also true that those individuals who occupy the Bible's Hall of shame failed because they disobeyed God's Word.*** Cain, Esau, Absalom, Judas, and others failed ***due to their disobedience*** of God.

The N.T tells us of the blessings of obeying the Word of God.

- ***These many blessings include receiving forgiveness*** and *the Holy Spirit.*
- These benefits all are available ***only to those who obey the Word of God.***
- Moreover, ***we grow in grace*** by obeying God.
- ***We receive answers to prayer through obedience to God.***
- ***Healing for our body*** comes *by obeying God's Word.*
- ***The blessings of God*** are available to those ***who will faithfully obey God.***

**CLOSE:** Mary and Martha essentially were no different from any of us.

- They exhibited actions and behaviors that we also tend to exhibit.
- ***We have the potential to be busy in natural affairs*** and ***insensitive to the presence of God*** like Martha, or ***we can possess the same spirit as Mary.***
- ***The decision is up to us.***