

• *Jesus journey continues – visit to Bethany*

From time to time we have reminders that Jesus is on a journey. This incident was one of many that took place 'as they were travelling along'. Jesus and His disciples were welcomed into the home of Martha. From other references to Martha we know that the place is Bethany. There is reason to think that Jesus was wandering around a lot at this time; this was a time when He was travelling near Jerusalem.

• *Two sisters – Mary and Martha*

We meet two sisters, Martha and Mary. We know from John's Gospel that they had a brother, Lazarus, but he is not mentioned in Luke 10. One gets the impression here that Martha is the owner of the house: 'a woman named Martha received him'<sup>1</sup>.<sup>1</sup> It is obvious that Martha and Mary have different temperaments. Martha is a conscientious person. She seems to be the older sister. She wanted to show her love for Jesus by doing as much for Him as she could. Evidently she was a person of great activity, and was the kind of person who is not afraid to speak out her mind when necessary.

10:38

• *Martha a conscientious doer*

• *Mary – a quiet listener*

Mary is different. She shows her love for Jesus by wanting to listen to Him. She wants to listen rather than to speak, to sit rather than to rush around getting things done. She was an altogether different kind of person. It is important in the Christian life to accept the fact that personalities are different. We do not have to criticise other people because they are noisier than us or quieter than us. Some Christians will be very active and energetic. Others will be quieter and more contemplative.

• *Temperaments vary*

• *Each temperament has its own weakness*

Each temperament has its own weaknesses. One problem for the active and energetic person is that he or she tends never to sit still to listen to Jesus. Let us consider the three characters: Mary, Martha and Jesus

### 1. Consider Martha

• *Busy making Jesus feel welcome*

1. **Consider Martha.** She is obviously a spiritually minded person. She appreciates Jesus and is hospitable towards Him. She puts herself to a lot of trouble to make Him feel welcome. But she is so busy in the work of the house that Martha is not listening to Jesus' teaching at all. She is busy in the home getting things in the house quite perfect for Jesus. Perhaps she is cooking for Him and His disciples. Perhaps she is making arrangements for His sleeping there that night.

• *Spiritual – but her priorities are not right*

She is a spiritual lady but her priorities are not right. There are some things more important than perfect housekeeping. Jesus actually only has a few weeks to live. He is making His last journey to Jerusalem. Martha is an active, energetic person. She gets busy in the things of the house, and is doing many things for Jesus but she is not giving much time to Jesus Himself.

• *Perfectionism in lesser things is not a strength*

Martha is a spiritual lady but she has fallen into perfectionism – the desire to get everything absolutely perfect. A desire for perfection in lesser things is a weakness of personality, not a strength. Life is too momentous to be worrying about perfect arrangements in minor matters. Martha gets quite distracted. She does not have much help. She has a lot to do and she gets distressed and anxious about how she will provide hospitality for Jesus and His friends. Eventually she is distressed and feels she must speak to Jesus. She wants Jesus to rebuke her sister, and get her to give her some help.

## 2. Consider Mary

- Ready to listen

2. **Consider Mary.** Mary is not paying much attention to the work of the house. Jesus has a few disciples with Him and spends a lot of time teaching them. Mary joins them and sits at Jesus' feet listening to His teaching<sup>Ⓜ1</sup>. She is ready to spend time with Jesus. Others things can be done later and do not have to be perfect in their arrangements.

Ⓜ1 10:39

## 3. Consider Jesus

- Has a sense of priorities

- Expressing kindness – listening - not fussing

- Special times to listen to the voice of Jesus

3. **Consider Jesus.** At this point He commends Mary not Martha. He has a sense of priorities. Jesus had far more important things to attend to than to have perfect cooking arranged for Him. He was not wanting large and perfectly prepared meals. Sometimes the travelling preacher is given more food than he wants. The Marthas of this world can be a nuisance! People love to be kind but sometimes they want to be kind in **their** way and so they end up being a nuisance. Kindness in such a situation is to attend to the visitor with the minimum of fuss and bother. Kindness is to listen to his message and give him time to pray and think.

Jesus speaks frankly to Martha. '*Mary has chosen the better part, and it is not going to be taken away from her*'<sup>Ⓜ1</sup>. The one thing that is needful is to spend time listening to Jesus. Our earthly responsibilities require attention but not so much attention that we neglect to spend time with Jesus. We can risk being less-than-perfect in many areas of life but we must not be neglectful when Jesus is speaking. The housework can be done at any time; the voice of Jesus comes at special times and in those special times we must give our attention to Him.



Ⓜ1 10:42

- Listening to Jesus – one of the great secrets of the Christian life

One of the great secrets of the Christian life is to learn to put everything aside occasionally in order to listen to Jesus. It might be housework that gets left aside, it might be sermon-preparation! It is not needful to have a perfectly tidy home, and it is not needful for a preacher to have a perfectly tidy sermon! One thing is needful absolutely and utterly: it is necessary that when Jesus wants to teach us that we stop to listen to Him.

### Note

1. Some manuscripts have the words 'into her house' but the better manuscripts lack these words.

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