

Mary and Martha - A Contrast

Introduction

1. Today is Mother's Day. A day in which we set aside some time to honor our mothers for all that they have taught us and what they do for us.
2. Before I get to the heart of this morning's lesson, I thought you would enjoy this list of some of the things that our mothers taught us when we were young.
 - A. Our mothers taught us **LOGIC**: "If you fall off that swing and break your neck, you can't go to the store with me," as well as, "If everyone else jumped off a cliff would you do it too?"
 - B. Our mothers taught us **HUMOR**: "When that lawn mower cuts off your toes, don't come running to me."
 - C. Our mothers taught us **GENETICS**: "You are just like your father!"
 - D. Our mothers taught us **ANTICIPATION**: "Just wait until your father gets home."
 - E. Our mothers taught us about **RECEIVING**: "You are going to get it when I get you home."
 - F. Our mothers taught us about **RELIGION**: "You better pray that will come out of the carpet."
 - G. Our mothers taught us about **STAMINA**: "You'll sit there until all that spinach is finished."

- 3. Mary and Martha are two women in the Bible who also teach us valuable lessons about life.**
 - A. In Luke 10:41, Jesus said:** “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things.”

Sisters Who Are Different

- 1. When you think about it, Mary and Martha were two sisters who were as different as night and day.**
 - A. Martha was a picture of the perfect hostess.**
 - 1) She loved to entertain company; of course, as long as they called in advance. Martha is a perfectionist and yet, she is her own worst enemy.**
 - 2) She sets expectations that she can never meet. She is never able to completely rest and be content. Life for Martha seems to be an unfinished task.**
 - B. On the other hand, Mary, Martha's sister, is not much into the hostess scene.**
 - 1) It's not that Mary does not also enjoy having company over, but Mary is more interested in conversation than the day's menu.**
 - 2) When you drop in at Mary's house for a visit she may have you go fetch your own glass of iced tea. It's not that Mary doesn't care. Mary just takes life as it comes and material comforts and hostess graces are just not that important to her.**

2. **One time when Jesus was at the home of Mary and Martha, Mary broke a very expensive bottle of fragrant perfume and she anointed Jesus with the oil.**

Mark 14:3-9

John 12:1-8

- A. **This was an expression of Mary's love and devotion to Jesus. Some of Jesus' disciples became infuriated at her for doing that.**

- 1) **Martha was there (John 12:2) when Mary did this.**

Another Contrast Between the Two Sisters

1. **In Luke 10:38-42 we discover an occasion where the stark contrast between these two sisters, Martha and Mary, is obvious.**

Luke 10:38-42

- A. **Mary is sitting at the feet of Jesus. Martha "was distracted with much serving." Mary is enthralled as she sits at the feet of the savior.**

- B. **The Bible tells us (Luke 10:38) that Martha welcomed Jesus into her house.**

- 1) **This visit does not appear to have been planned. Because of the short notice there would be much work to do if dinner was going to be on the table.**
- 2) **It did not take long for Martha to become stressed at the fact that Mary was sitting while she was serving.**

- 3) Martha directed her concern towards Jesus (Luke 10:40). She is essentially saying "Lord, if you really cared about me you would rebuke my sister Mary and tell her to get in here and help me serve."**
 - a. Martha is telling Jesus what he should do. Sometimes when people do not act the way we want them to, we often want someone else to straighten the person out for us.**

Martha is Not a Bad Person

- 1. It's easy to focus on Martha's apparent stress and frustration, but I want us to consider her in a little different light.**
 - A. Martha is not really a bad person. In fact, she is a woman of dedication and she is a doer. I can just imagine that she is the kind of woman that probably seldom complains, seldom misses the smallest details, and she can always be counted on when you need her.**
 - B. Martha is certainly a commendable woman. Thank God for the Martha's of the world! This story is not in the Bible to teach us that serving is bad and that sitting is good. Under different circumstances serving may have been the best course of action.**

Maintaining a Balance in Life

1. **This is a story about maintaining a much-needed balance in life.**
 - A. **It's a story about the need to recognize that we are human, we stumble, and we fall short.**
 - B. **It's a story about being human and how we desperately need to realize just how human we are.**
 - C. **It's a story about setting priorities and making the best choices in life.**
2. **In life we are not usually confronted with choices that are outright good vs. bad! Those are the easy ones to make for the true Christian in their service to God.**
 - A. **But, oh how difficult are the everyday choices between what is good and what is **best!****
3. **In this instance (Luke 10:38-42) there were more important things to do than housework and preparing supper.**
 - A. **What Jesus desired was not dinner, but devotion. Martha was "worried and troubled about many things."**
 - B. **Martha's worried and anxious heart would not find rest in serving (**trying harder and doing more**) but by sitting at the feet of Jesus and finding rest in His presence.**

Choosing What is Good and What is Best

1. **How do we know the difference between choosing what is good and what is best at any given time?**
 - A. **We have to examine our life below the superficial level of outward appearances.**
 - 1) **If only Martha could have stopped long enough to see herself as Jesus did, then she could have seen that her life was filled with busyness but inside she was running on empty.**
 - 2) **Her life was one of frustration and distractions. Her calendar was filled with activities and engagements (good things) but she was missing out on the best things in life.**
 - B. **Jesus was saying to Martha, "Martha, you need to re-prioritize your life." Martha was caught up in what many of us are snared in today — the performance trap. In Martha's mind she had to do it all.**
 - 1) **She was setting expectations she could never meet.**
 - 2) **What Mary knew and what Martha needed to know was that in a devoted relationship with Jesus Christ, God's unconditional love and grace are experienced and we are set free from the bondage of the performance trap.**
 - 3) **Martha needed to know that she didn't have to do everything and that was ok. Martha needed to know what we need to know today. In Jesus Christ we are set free from a life of trivial pursuit and emptiness.**

Conclusion

1. **How about each one of us? Is our life filled with purpose and peace or does our life look more like Martha's life — stressed and frayed?**
2. **When we accept Christ then we are able to accept ourselves and we become empowered to accept others.**
 - A. **There is good news for the “beat-up, and burnt out!” That good news is that you can experience God's rest and acceptance today.**
3. **Where do we start?**
 - A. **First, recognize that we are human. Like all humans we fall short (Romans 3:23). We cannot make it in life without Jesus Christ — His grace and power. Even Martha's need Jesus.**
 - B. **Second, we must give Jesus Christ complete control of our life. Simply said, don't try to be superwoman (or superman for that matter) but let Christ give us His peace and rest.**
4. **Jesus' words still ring true for us today: “Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden [distracted, anxious, tired, frustrated], and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).**
5. **May we all look to the example of Mary and Martha and learn to give our **BEST** not just the good.**

