

Do you think Jesus was too hard on Martha?

Did Martha need to worry about breaking the women disciples taboo?

 **Read Numbers 11:10-15**

It was this attitude in Moses life that caused him to strike the rock and in the end, kept him out of the promised land. Numbers 20:12

Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labour in vain. Psalm 127:1

 **Mary's attitude**

What does Jesus commend Mary for?

Does he commend her for being lazy and avoiding work?

 **Was she being lazy?**

What does Jesus want more, us or our service?

He is acknowledging Mary as a disciple and prioritising a relationship with Him. In Christian ministry and maturity you cannot rise above your relationship with Jesus.

Be still, and know that I am God; Psalm 46:10


 **Read Hebrew 4:7-11**

The Bible talks about entering God's rest.

Does this mean that we stop all our work for God?

The rest here is an attitude of heart a place of trust and security before God. Relying on Him, listening to his word obeying Him and not trying to do everything through our own effort. The Christian life does not have to be a strain and a burden. If it is maybe there is too much Martha in us and not enough Mary.


The necessary distracts us from the needed.

 *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30

It is from this position of rest that you serve God.

What would happen if Mary only ever sat at Jesus' feet?

 The Martha's of this world, keep the drug companies in business, they build edifices but do not achieve much for God, they drive their families, churches a probably God crazy. They suffer from stomach ulcers and die of heart attacks before their time. They never know God's rest.

 **What should we do when we get into a Martha state?**

What is the one thing that is needed?

A relationship with Jesus. An attitude of trust. It is only from this that the Martha's of this world lose their stress and serve God well.

What things have to come first in our lives so that we serve God well?

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Mary and Martha

 **Read Luke 10:38-42**


Mary and Martha lived at Bethany on the far side of the Mt. of Olives a short distance from Jerusalem. Jesus seems to have stayed there often, using it as a base while he was ministering in Jerusalem. He was especially close to Lazarus, Mary and Martha's brother, he is described as "the one you love." If Jesus and his disciples were visiting, there must have been much work to be done. Martha is busy organizing food and beds. Some think this might have been the first time Jesus had stayed there and Martha wants everything to be just right. Mary is listening to Jesus leaving Martha with all the work.


Many of us find difficulty with this story.

 **Opinion poll: Who was right? Mary Martha**
Who are your sympathies with? Mary Martha


 We can read this story in two ways.
Mary has found a place close to Jesus and is listening as he teaches. The phrase 'sitting at Jesus' feet' is a euphemism. It is used in the Greek of Acts 22:3.

What does it mean?

 In Rabbinic thought to sit at a Rabbi's feet could only mean one thing. It means to learn as a disciple. Culturally this was not a women's place. Women were not allowed to learn Torah. Most would even consider it a sin. What Jesus is doing here is counter-cultural.

 **What does this tell us about Jesus attitude to women?**
Why might Martha have asked Jesus to rebuke her?
What risk did Jesus run by letting Mary learn as a disciple?


This could have serious implications for Jesus ministry. Few would condone His action. Martha is not so worried about doing all the work herself as she is that Jesus is allowing something He should not have allowed. He is breaking a long set taboo. Martha is trying to put this right.

 When Martha says, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" This is her way of trying to get things back to the way they should be. She is trying to stop Mary from making a fool of herself and Jesus doing the unthinkable.

Mary is adopting a role forbidden to her. She is being a Kate Sheppard. This is a Rosa Parks moment.

 **Why do you think she did this?**
What implications does Jesus actions have for women in the church today?
Why do some still have a problem with this today?

The equality of women in the kingdom of God is the core meaning of this passage.

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- Generally, we read this passage as an allegory for work and grace. Martha stands for salvation by works and Mary for salvation by grace. As we will see reading it this way has some fairly big holes, but it also has some things to teach us. The problem was that Mary's choice to be a disciple still left Martha doing all the work!

? **How do you think Martha felt left to do all the work alone?**
Instead of being a pleasure to offer service, it had become a duty, an obligation, a struggle a chore. The joy of having Jesus stay had become a burden.

Can anyone identify with that attitude?

♥ *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!"*

? **What was Martha's attitude?**
What was Mary's attitude?

Martha: Don't you see how much needs to be done? Thinks Mary needs to accept her role.

Mary: Wants to know Jesus and here is the opportunity He is in her house.

Martha; Overly occupied and too busy and is working herself into a state. Emotions are al aria. Distracted. Missing what was most important.

Mary: Sees her priorities, she knows what is important.

Martha: Can only see the work.

Mary: Can only see Jesus.

Martha: Stressed out and anxious.

Mary: Want to be a disciple.

Martha: Wants the status quo.

? **What was important to Mary?**
What was important to Martha?
In Martha's position, what would you have done?

♥ *"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."*

Martha walks away totally confused.

What has Martha done wrong?

✓ In context, Mary's better way was the role of a disciple. But it was also making Jesus the centre and finding rest in Him.

! Jesus never says that Martha has done anything wrong. Martha was a servant and being a servant is good. He did not tell her off. However, He was concerned about the anxiety and stress that her service for Him had created in her. He calmed her down.

? **Do you think Jesus wanted a meal that night?**
Do you think He got one?

This is where the works - grace allegory breaks down. Yes everyone wanted to eat that night and that means that many things need to be done.

▶ **Many things**
There is so much work to be done in the Kingdom of God.
Luke 10:2
Luke 19:13
Ephesians 2:10
Ephesians 4:12

? **What happens if we neglect this work?**
There are multiple warning in scripture for those who neglect the work that God has called us to do. The danger is that in doing this we emulate a Martha attitude. This story identifies two personality types and way of serving God. One Jesus identified as what was best.

▶ **The Martha attitude**
What Martha was doing what was necessary. It was not what she was doing that was the problem but how she was doing them. Jesus is saying that her work is important but there are things that are more important. This passage is not about actions if it were Martha would be the hero, it is about attitudes and priorities. It is also about keeping people in their right places.

? Martha's attitude was wrong.
How?

! She could not open up to the new ideas Jesus was bringing, they threatened her. She worried too much about what people might think.

She had got herself into a state she was anxious, upset and resentful. She assumed that because something was her job it made it Mary's. She placed the physical over the spiritual. The temporal over the eternal. Martha had lost her focus.

? **How do we do these things today in Church life?**
What dangers are there in this attitude?

What Martha did was good but what Mary did was better. There is a need to find a balance between these two attitudes.

✓ It is easy to be hard on Martha. This passage is written for our benefit not to solve a domestic dispute. Behind it is a fundamental tension in the Christian life, in which both extremes are wrong. The story calls us to balance our Christian life and service. Mary represents worship, devotion and knowing God. Martha represents service, work and action.

Is Jesus denigrating the importance of Service?

No, He is not, He is strong a priority and an order. Relationship to Jesus must come first. The story is written this way because we tend to be by nature Martha's. It is much easier to be a Martha than a Mary and Matha's in the Church outnumber Mary's. Mary's position is the fragile one. Mary just wants to be a disciple.

- It is where Martha's attitude leads and the tone of resentment in it, that is the danger. I'm busy for the Lord, my work for him should be recognised and puts me in good standing with him. Work is more important than faith. Work is more important than my relationship with God. I'm sacrificing for God, I'm working hard, no one seems grateful no one wants to help. Everything is achieved by human effort and God owes us something for our work.

Can you really be distracted by serving God?

Martha represents those who neglect their personal relationship with Christ in favour of service for Christ. In reality, both are needed, but the first is more important.

? **Why?**
Do you think Martha realised her attitude was wrong?
What would she have put her service down to?