

# READING PLAN: MARY and MARTHA

## Day One

*Read Luke 10:38-42*

How are you with time management? If you think about school, are you the type of person that has a three-ring binder for every class - color-coded - with tabs for every week? Maybe you find yourself on the other end of that spectrum - you're more of a night-before kinda person. Are you a strong starter, with your binders, but now you don't know where those binders are, as you write that essay in the wee hours of the night before it's due.

School assignments are one thing - things we love are another thing entirely.

If there's something we are looking forward to, like proms or getting your first car, we can be efficient and organized as Daniel Mead himself (creator of the Mead© organizers). We'll plan months in advance what we are going to wear to prom. We'll work for hours making our new car as spotless and cool as possible.

Our priorities get first dibs to our time.

Mary and Martha welcomed a very important guest. Martha wanted to make Jesus feel welcome by impressing him. Mary wanted to make Jesus feel welcome by acknowledging him. Martha appealed to Jesus' authority ("Tell her to help me!"). Mary appealed to Jesus' grace. There are times for both in our lives, but Jesus' presence should always be a priority for us.

Choosing Jesus' presence is always better than, well, it's better than any other thing in life.

Questions:

1. Outside of your relationship with Jesus, what would you say are the top 5 priorities of your life?
2. How does Jesus fit into those priorities you listed?
3. What things could you adjust in your daily routine that would give Jesus more of a priority in your life?

## Day Two

*Read Luke 10:38-39*

Don't you feel special being invited to stuff? Right now, as the Corona Virus continues to limit our coming and going, it's a breath of fresh air (no pun intended) when your squad texts you and invites you out for some trunking or hammocking - all good social-distancing activities.

Martha gets such a bad rap in this passage! We always focus on the part of the story where Martha is stressed about the lack of help in the kitchen and Jesus' response to her. We love to give kudos to Mary for "choosing" to sit at Jesus' feet, worshipping, and listening to Him. But, could we also give Martha a little credit for her own act of worship - the Invite?

Verse 38 tells us that the invitation to Jesus to come to visit came from Martha. It was Martha who recognized Jesus. It was Martha who took the initiative to invite Jesus over. It was Martha who took steps to make Jesus feel welcome.

While it's true that Mary is credited with worshipping Jesus, Martha also worshipped Jesus with her invitation. Her acknowledgment of Jesus' presence in her life shows her heart in the matter. Worship is both invitation and attention to Jesus.

Questions:

1. What are the ways that a person can worship Jesus - acknowledge Him in their lives?
2. What areas of your life do you need to invite Jesus into?
3. How is inviting Jesus into certain parts of your life an act of worship?

## Day Three

*Read Luke 10:40*

When you're a kid, things being "fair" are a big deal. I'm the oldest in my family and when my younger brother would whine about things being unfair, I would smile with a big grin on my face because I knew what was coming next from my parents: "Life ain't fair." (We are from the South.)

With the shoe on the other foot, however, the pain is much more real. When my friends would get to do things and I couldn't, I would pull the "fairness" card. Never worked. I would sulk and grumble and dream of the day when I could make my own choices.

What is it with our need for things to be fair? The thought of someone getting a leg up on us drives us crazy!

Martha's dilemma revolved around fairness. She was doing all the work; Mary was sitting doing "nothing". It was unfair. Mary was enjoying her time with Jesus; Martha was having to slave over a stove away from Jesus.

Funny thing about that - Jesus' commands us often to revolve around serving others. Paired with that is an attitude of "you, then me". Jesus called us to serve one another, but not expecting to get anything back. We are to serve others regardless of their response to us. Martha's act of serving was conditional - "I'll serve you, Jesus, as long as I don't have to do it alone." When we put conditions on our service, we aren't serving like Jesus. There were no conditions on his sacrifice for us.

Questions:

1. Do you sometimes serve other people with wrong motives or a wrong attitude? Think about a time you did that.
2. Are there certain people you have a hard time serving with a good attitude? Why is it difficult?
3. Why is our attitude of service important to Jesus?

## Day Four

*Read John 11:1-15*

Today, we are going to take the story of Mary and Martha into another encounter they had with Jesus. Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, had been sick. They called for Jesus to come and heal him. In a matter of days, Lazarus would be dead. This was an urgent plea.

And because of Jesus' great love for them, he waited four more days. Wait. What? That doesn't sound right, does it? If Jesus loved them so much, why did He wait? Jesus tells us in verse 4, "This sickness will not end in death but is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified in it."

Sometimes, there are bigger things going on around us that we just aren't aware of. God is working, and many times we don't see what He's doing until after it's all said and done. Jesus' delayed response to Mary and Martha's plea for help was designed to show a different side of Himself to them. He wanted his love for them to be something deeper - more meaningful. He wanted his act of love to affect a bigger crowd of people rather than just one small family.

God sometimes delays his answers to our prayers. It's wise for us to step back and ask God to give us a "big picture" view of what He's doing rather than take the delayed response personally. God loves us too much to give us everything we ask for - and on our time table.

Questions:

1. What do you think Jesus' delay in answering Mary and Martha did for their relationship with Him?
2. Has God ever delayed an answer to a prayer of yours? What was the outcome?
3. How can you see God doing something greater in a situation you are waiting through right now?

## Day Five

*Read John 11:17-44*

During the season of quarantine, many of us longed to be around people. Sure, we've seen our friends' faces and talked throughout the day via our phones. We've blown up their phones with text messages. But, there's just something about being present with the people you love.

Mary and Martha both had the same response to Jesus when they met Him on His return to Bethany. Both women approached Jesus with this statement:

"Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died." (v. 21 and 32)

Mary and Martha needed the presence of Jesus in order for their brother, Lazarus, to live. They saw that Jesus' physical presence was the key to life. When Jesus informed them that He was "the Resurrection and the Life", Mary and Martha got a deeper knowledge of Jesus' love and power. The touch of Jesus is powerful, but the word of Jesus is just as powerful. Everyone at that moment came to that realization.

What a comfort for us to know we have this power at our disposal! Jesus spoke these words to His disciples just before He ascended. Matthew 28:20 should be stamped on our hearts:

"And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Jesus' name is Immanuel, which means "God with us". Celebrate this Truth today - Jesus is present with you!

Questions:

1. When do you feel God's presence most?
2. How should we cope with those times when we don't feel God's presence?
3. How would it change the day for you if you truly realized that Jesus is with you every moment of your day?