

Mary AND Martha...

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*As they continued their travel, Jesus entered a village. A woman by the name of Martha welcomed him and made him feel quite at home. She had a sister, Mary, who sat before the Master, hanging on every word he said. But Martha was pulled away by all she had to do in the kitchen. Later, she stepped in, interrupting them. "Master, don't you care that my sister has abandoned the kitchen to me? Tell her to lend me a hand."*

*The Master said, "Martha, dear Martha, you're fussing far too much and getting yourself worked up over nothing. One thing only is essential, and Mary has chosen it—it's the main course, and won't be taken from her."*

### **Luke 10: 38-42 (The Message)**

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When we read the verses in Luke 10... we see a picture of domestic life that we can relate to: someone doing all the work while someone else is slaving away... in the kitchen.

We quite rightly connect with Martha... we see the injustice of the situation: Mary isn't pulling her weight... she isn't doing her fair share. We can understand Martha's indignation... and would have probably done/said the same thing if we were in her position.

Thing is... as ever... the Lord turns the whole thing around... turns the situation on its head.

*"One thing only is essential and Mary has chosen it..."*

Mary had chosen to spend time with her Lord... the Message translation speaks of her *"hanging on every word he said"*. She was listening to what the Lord said... and what's more, she was taking time out from her daily

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routine to do so.

Life is busy. What with work... family... and personal commitments... we sometimes don't have time for ourselves. Throw in a busy church and community life... and well, there isn't much time left.

Life creates a Martha out of each of us. We are all busy with no time for others or ourselves.

I would ask... is your busy life squeezing out God? Are we too busy in the kitchen to spend time with God... just as Martha was too busy to sit with Jesus like Mary did.

Do you have time to “hang on every word he said”? Do you make time? Do you block out time in your day for time with God? It doesn't need to be a lot of time... it just needs to be meaningful. It's about quality rather than quantity.

Every deep relationship we have works on a quality basis. Conversation without distraction... one on one... time together... just like Jesus and Mary.

Why? Why spend time in this way? Why put so much emphasis on building and maintaining a relationship with God in this way?

Because it gives true meaning to our lives and the activity we undertake... we can only be a Martha if we are firstly a Mary.

Action comes from our love. Service comes from love. How we interact with our neighbours and complete strangers comes, or at least should come, from love.

Whatever you do... do it in love... and do it because of your relationship with Jesus.

Martha wasn't wrong in doing what she did. The Lord isn't saying action is

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bad... it's just that her priority was wrong. We need to get the right priorities in this life... Putting God first and foremost in our lives and taking time to rest in His presence is the most important.

Jesus summarised the Law simply as saying we need to love God with all we have... and to love our neighbour as ourselves. For us to love God we need to form... build... and maintain a relationship with Him.

Sometimes, though, we are too busy. Other things get in the way. Even church can get in the way of an ongoing relationship. Relationships take time... quality time... and we are usually too busy to spare our quality time.

Is this the case with you?

Is the Lord saying to you what He said to Martha?

*Martha, dear Martha, you're fussing far too much and getting yourself worked up over nothing.*

Are we getting all worked up over nothing? Even the most legitimate task, if done for the wrong reasons, is of little value.

If we are busy all the time... and have no time for rest... then we risk burning out... falling down without the strength or the inclination to get up.

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*Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.*

### **Matthew 11: 28-30 (The Message)**

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The Lord wants us to come to Him... to get away with Him... so that we can

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recover our lives... to recover our desire to get up every time we fall down.

He gives us the purpose, the direction and the reason for doing what we do... with love and intention... we shine through Him and, in doing so, show a different way of living.

This way of living responds to the unforced rhythms of His grace. Grace doesn't force its way into our lives... and it doesn't lay the heavy weight of obligation on our shoulders. We don't have to act to save our souls... our souls are saved through our belief in Jesus... our actions are a result of this ongoing belief.

True rest comes when we do what we want to do. I don't work for the pleasure of it... although it is fun to spend time with the people I work with. I work for a reason. Rest comes when we do things we want to... for the sheer love of doing them.

We need to walk with the Lord... watch and learn from Him... just as Mary did. In doing so... by developing a full relationship with Jesus that means we spend purposeful time with Him... and then put this into action.

Thing is... we must act. Although Mary has the right idea to spend time with Jesus... she too will have gotten up and acted upon what she heard. She would have joined Martha in action.

What this weary world needs is followers of God in the Way of Jesus who know their saviour and act upon this knowledge. In other words we need Mary AND Martha.

This world needs action... action formed in love and relationship with the Lord. Not action for its own sake... but action marinated in love. Afterall, the Apostle Paul speaks of actions without love as being terrible noise.

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